THE MYTH OF CYBERTERRORISM

The Washington Monthly

Our New Central Asian Empire

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Why Democrats Can't Think Straight About War

by Heather Hurlburt

Reviews by Gregg Easterbrook and Jane Mayer

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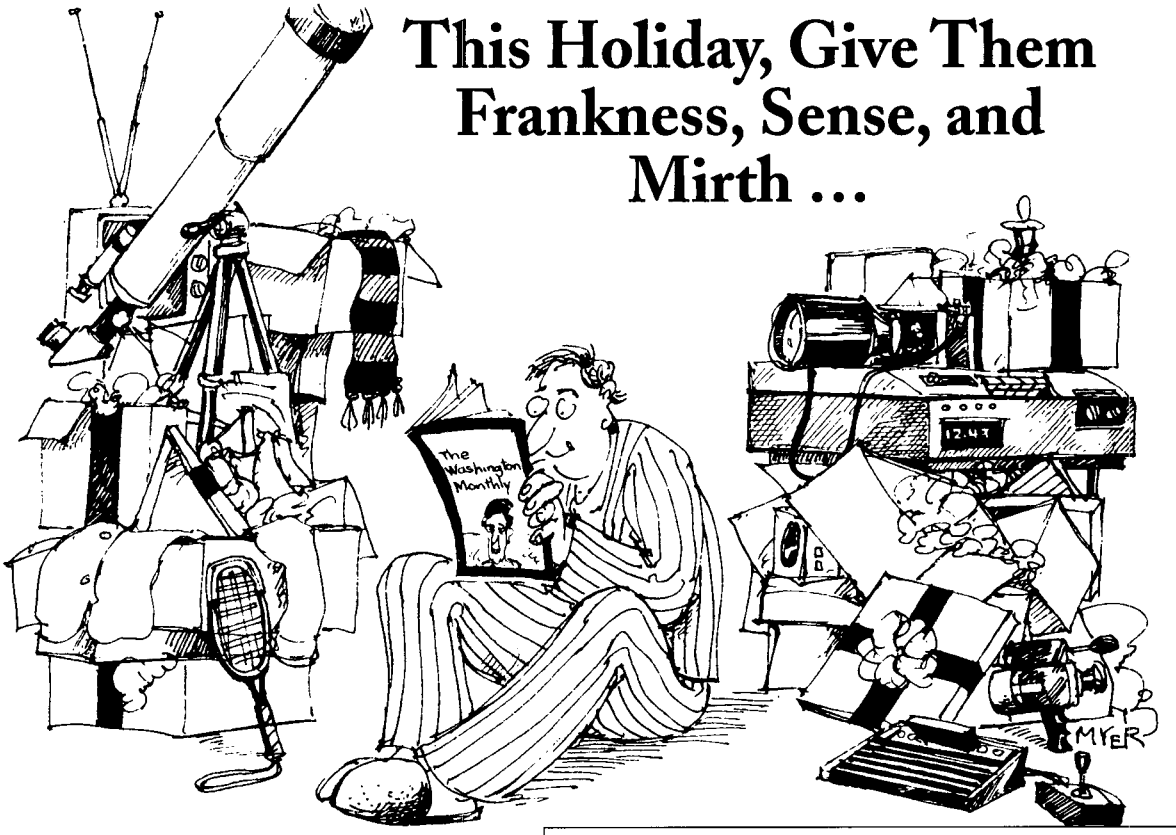

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Letters

Bombs Away?

The hawks in Washington should pay more attention to Gen. Wesley Clark's understanding of the reality of America's position in the world—and to his practical experience waging war in the Balkans—before they decide to "bomb Saddam." As an American who has lived in Germany for the past 25 years, I believe Gen. Clark did a great job in holding the coalition together, giving moral legitimacy to the Allies' military effort to restore order in that part of Europe. We must engage our friends around the world in the peace-keeping process, not shut them out.

MARYAN HERR
via email

As a Republican, I am grateful that dissenting voices of reason, such as those of Gen. Wesley Clark and Brent Scowcroft, are being heard. But is President Bush listening? Somehow I don't believe he will reverse himself, as politicians' egos seem to be more important to them than reason. I will note that the elder President Bush would have never isolated the United States from NATO as his son has. In this respect our current president has truly let all Americans down.

PETER S. GRIMM
Bloomfield, N.J.

Having endured a hard slog through Gen. Wesley Clark's *Waging Modern War* and having relied quite heavily on it in forming my own thinking about fighting wars through coalitions, I was a bit taken aback by Clark's article ("An Army of One," September) for two reasons. First, I thought the lesson taught by his book was that conducting a war through a coalition is so difficult that it should not be done unless there is strong agreement among the coalition members as to why and how the war was to be fought. Therefore, I was surprised to see Clark take the position that the lesson of the Kosovo campaign was not that NATO was an obstacle to victory but that it was the reason for the victory—and to conclude that action in Iraq should be done through NATO.

But I was most taken aback by the inaccuracy of Clark's assertion that U.N. Security Council Resolution 1199 authorized the use of force in Kosovo and therefore gave the military intervention "international legal and moral authority." In fact, it was the absence in Res. 1199 of the magic words authorizing "all necessary means" found in other Security Council resolutions authorizing the use of force, such as 678 (Iraq) and 940 (Haiti), that sent international lawyers scampering for an international legal justification for the use of force in Kosovo. The U.S. State Department's legal adviser never rendered an opinion on the legal justification for the use of force, so one wonders where Clark got his legal advice.

Similar questions were raised as to the source of NATO's authority to intervene in Kosovo, because the treaty creating NATO authorizes the use of force only in the exercise of self-defense as contemplated by Article 51 of the U.N. Charter.

EDWIN D. WILLIAMSON
Washington, D.C.
(The writer is a partner at Sullivan & Cromwell and served as the State Department's legal adviser during the presidency of George H.W. Bush.)

Gen. Clark responds: Thanks for reading my article and book. But let me underscore the key lesson: Fight multilaterally—preferably with NATO, at least with a coalition—if at all possible. The overall advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Yes, it is difficult and frustrating to work with others whose interests will almost never precisely align with our own, and there will always be different views on strategy and tactics. But we can almost always afford the delays required by consultation and the compromises required to keep our allies aboard. We're simply so much more capable than any adversary right now. And waging war inside an alliance reduces conflicts with other policy priorities and distributes the burdens of diplomacy and post-conflict operations. Why shouldn't we seek such support if we can gain it? Recent events underscore the wisdom of this approach. After a period of attempting to "go it alone," the president went before the United Nations in September and gained much wider support for confronting Saddam. His administration is also now trying to win NATO backing for its Iraq policy and is admitting that it made a mistake not utilizing NATO in Afghanistan.

See pp 422-426 in the hardcover edition of my book for a fuller discussion.

Regarding Kosovo, we tried but couldn't get a specific U.N. resolution authorizing the use of force. We did, however, get resolution 1199, following upon 1160. Both invoked Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, which relates to action with "respect to threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression" and which is the basis for the authority to "use all necessary means." As I said in the article, this "helped," though it was not all we sought.

Finally, I would note that the principle of out-of-area actions was established by NATO in the early 1990s after much discussion and debate and has been accepted by all NATO governments. It does not contravene the NATO treaty. Indeed, Article IV of the treaty is frequently cited as the authority for such actions.

No Lack of Confidence

Joshua Micah Marshall's "Confidence Men" (September) is the single most insightful assessment of the Bush administration I have ever read. One wishes it could be published in wider circulation and that other media would take their blinders off to see it as well.

C. REED
via email

Public Schooling

Alexander Russo ("When School Choice Isn't," September) considers the interest in school choice a distraction. He urges fixing schools "the old-fashioned way": "better teachers, higher academic expectations, summer school, smaller classes and schools."

There's no question the feeble school choice provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act will be effortlessly thwarted by the establishment. But the "old-fashioned way" to "fix" schools has weaker prospects. If you want "better teachers," you need to bypass the education-school licensing monopoly and let districts hire whom they want, which would open the profession to graduates of selective universities. Smaller classes are expensive and lead to minimal gains; they tend to create openings in the suburbs for veteran teachers in urban schools and leave the

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neediest students with the least skilled teachers. Finally, while smaller schools are a very good idea, small schools are friendly places to work and harder for unions to organize; unions will resist any serious effort to create smaller schools. And while it is politically feasible to create "schools-within-a-school," these are weak substitutes for the real thing. The way to give children a small school experience is to give their parents options, including nonpublic schools.

TOM SHUFORD,
Public School Teacher, Retired
Ventura, Calif.

Russo got it right about phony "school choice." There is no alternative but to reshape, restructure, and reculture our large, anonymous, and low-performing schools. They won't improve by moving a few kids from one school to another, especially if we don't create many new, viable alternatives within the public school system. Vouchers have the same problem. Now that these underperforming schools have been identified, we need a massive infusion of dollars, good teachers, university and business partnerships, and community will to turn them around.

MICHAEL KLONSKY
Director, The Small Schools Workshop
University of Illinois at Chicago

Learning to Fly

In his recent column, Charles Peters ("Tilting at Windmills," September) took a couple of uninformed swipes at private pilots. He says we receive "gentler" treatment from "Congress and the FAA." Gentler than what? Private pilot training is bootcamp compared with training for private drivers and private boaters. We are also required to submit to biennial flight reviews with a qualified instructor, and many of us get booted out of the cockpit due to medical conditions that would not affect the privileges of the driver of a 700-hp speed boat on a public lake. Mr. Peters apparently believes that private pilots as a group are cavalier toward aviation risks. I suppose there are a few jerks in every crowd, but on the whole we're a pretty conscientious bunch, especially those of us who fly with family or friends. We know that flying an airplane is more dangerous than driving a car. As private pilots we learn to think in terms of risk management. If we go on to more demanding ratings and more complex aircraft, risk management takes on more and more significance. I don't think anyone in aviation is satisfied with the status quo, but as a group we are anything but cavalier about it.

DAVID M. SMITH
Plano, Texas

Extreme Greeks

In his review of Takis Michas' *Unholy Alliance* ("The New Anti-Americanism," September), Gregory Maniatis focuses on Michas's argument regarding the ideological rapprochement between the far left and certain elements of the neo-orthodox far right in contemporary Greece. This is a truly remarkable development that is fundamentally anti-modern and anti-globalization in nature, and hence only incidentally anti-American.

However, Greece's far left and far right are minority movements fighting a rearguard and futile battle, not unlike the Luddites who in centuries past quixotically battled industrialization. Their current importance and policy influence in Greece is even more marginal than Maniatis suggests, thanks to the existence of competing tradition in Greek society—a rational, enlightened tradition rooted in the work of Adamantios Koraes, perhaps the greatest Greek thinker in recent centuries. In this tradition, Greece is fundamentally European, while Greeks, 85 percent of whom are Europhiles, accept the country's modernization and welcome the challenges of globalization.

This tradition has given birth to a movement whose ranks include the majority of citizens, almost all mainstream politicians, and most leading intellectuals. They support human rights, regional democratic reform, economic growth, the incorporation of the Balkans into Euro-Atlantic structures as soon as possible. The Greek mainstream will continue to support such a foreign policy stance, despite vocal, reactionary, anti-Western elements that are destined to play, at best, a marginal role.

DR. ARISTOTLE TZIAMPIRIS
Department of International and
European Studies, University of Piraeus
Athens, Greece

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

The Case for Class Warfare • Piggybacking Plaintiffs • By the Book at the FBI
Buena Vista Social Club • General Rove and Field Marshal Wolfowitz

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THE BUSH gang is applying its Florida recount strategy to the U.N.'s inspection of Iraq's weapons? Just as they delayed the recount until it was too late, they are delaying the inspection or finding fault with the inspection plans—delaying until the administration comes up with enough "intelligence" to justify a preemptive strike.

WE HAVEN'T RUN A CONVENTION abuse item in quite awhile, but a veteran reader, aware of my fondness for examples of the chicanery involved in taking tax deductions for fun-in-the-sun excursions, has sent me the brochure for the meeting of the Torts, Insurance, and Corporate Law Section of the New York State Bar Association, to be held Nov. 7-10 at the Disney Yacht and Beach Club Resort, Lake Buena Vista, Fla. The morning sessions do have some relation to the practice of law. I was particularly struck by the 8:30 a.m. Saturday session on "Ethical Issues Facing the Trial Attorney," which I'm sure will be crowded with trial lawyers whose deep concern for moral issues has long been one of their more conspicuous characteristics. In the afternoon and evening, any pretense of serious purpose is abandoned. Disney's Magnolia Golf Course is the venue for the afternoon activity. Then come cocktail parties, dinners, and Cirque du Soleil performances. Also included is a two-day Park-Hopper pass offering admission to the Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Disney-MGM Studios, and Disney's Animal Kingdom.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS, THE LONG-time editor of *Partisan Review* who died recently, was known to have had a running feud with his coeditor Philip Rahv. Of Rahv, who was not noted for his modesty, Phillips once said that there would be no use in having him undergo psychoanalysis: "Most of us under analysis, break down and admit our shortcomings; Philip would break down and confess he was a great man."

THE FOR-PROFIT WELLPOINT Health Network, Inc., is proposing to take over CareFirst, a nonprofit Washington healthcare provider. WellPoint devotes 25 percent of its income to administrative expense and profit, while CareFirst devotes only 12 percent of its income to administration. So CareFirst is clearly a better deal for the patient, isn't it? Of course. Then why is CareFirst interested in the deal? It may have something to do with the $78 million in severance payments its executives are being offered by WellPoint.

TAKI, PAT BUCHANAN'S PARTNER in the new magazine, *The American Conservative*, would not ordinarily qualify as one of Pat's heroes. Buchanan is famous for his dedication to family values. Taki has been quoted as saying, "Womanizing is a matter of honor. The more the better." And Pat's immigration policy is famously harsh on those of dubious character who want to enter this country. In 1984, Taki was arrested by British customs with 23 grams of cocaine in his possession. But why be picky? After all, Taki—whose last name, Theodoracopulos, makes clear why he prefers to be known by the first—is a millionaire, who in Buchanan's words "has been extremely generous in support of the magazine."

When Buchanan was asked if Taki isn't the kind of immigrant he'd keep out of the country, Buchanan replied, according to *The Washington Post*'s Peter Carlson: "I don't think he came across the Rio Grande."

"No," Taki added, "I came on my yacht."

ACTUALLY, I'M NOT WITHOUT sympathy for Pat's new venture. Speaking of Iraq, he asks, "Where are the conservatives who are against the war? Kristol, Podhoretz, Will, and Bennett, they're all hot for war and can't wait to get started."

For a long time there was, among American conservatives, an honorable tradition of skepticism regarding military adventures on foreign shores. But the movement's anti-Communism made it increasingly support deployment of American power abroad, and it became more and more an automatic advocate of militarism.

SPEAKING OF CONSERVATIVE militarism, if we call Karl Rove general, what title should we give Paul Wolfowitz? How about field marshal? It should reflect the fact that he is much more truly dedicated than Rove to the war on Iraq. There's reason to suspect that Rove's commitment will begin to diminish the day after the November election.

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BY THE WAY, *Newsweek* SAYS Rove is "out to destroy Ron Kirk, the popular, politically moderate and business-friendly Democratic mayor of Dallas," who is running for the U.S. Senate against Republican John Cronyn. When Kirk observed that it would not be the children of the wealthy who would fight Bush's war, Rove orchestrated an attack that forced Kirk to apologize. He should never have apologized. All he had said was, "I wonder how excited they'd be if I get to the United States Senate and put forth a resolution that says the next time we go to war, the first 500,000 kids have to come from families who earn $1 million or more?" For almost 30 years, the *Monthly* has advocated drafting the rich. The service avoidance of the affluent is one of the great scandals of American life.

REPUBLICANS LIKE TO DISMISS such ideas as "class warfare." But when the rich are screwing the rest of us by not serving, why shouldn't we speak up? And when 52 percent of the Bush tax reduction goes to people of incomes averaging $1.5 million annually, why shouldn't the rest of us say that it is unfair and it is wrong? If that's class warfare, I'm all for it. And Ron Kirk, you should be, too.

NOW WE KNOW WHY THE administration was less than eager to show Congress the CIA's national intelligence estimate on Iraq. It says that the likelihood that Iraq will attack us with weapons of mass destruction is low. This conclusion is remarkable because, as Vincent Conastrario, the former head of the agency's counterterrorism unit, tells *The Washington Post*'s Dana Priest, "There is a tremendous amount of pressure on the CIA to substantiate positions that have already been adopted by the administration." This pressure resulted in a cover letter for the intelligence estimate from the CIA's director George Tenet that describes "credible reporting" that al Qaeda "sought contacts in Iraq who could help them acquire WMD capabilities." The key words are "sought" and "could." You can be sure that Tenet was pressed to say something stronger.

52 percent of the Bush tax reduction goes to people who make $1.5 million annually, so why shouldn't the rest of us say that it is unfair? If that's class warfare, I'm all for it.

SOUTH CAROLINA federal courts are proposing to strike a blow against the secret settlement agreements criticized recently in this column. They have tentatively adopted a rule that means companies will no longer get away with concealing product defects and the Catholic Church won't be able to hide its child- abusers. It has amazed me how the press has been complicit in these concealments by reporting that the settlement terms were "sealed" without questioning why the public should have been denied information that might be necessary for its protection. This time, however, one paper helped inspire the federal court reform. *The State* of Columbia, S.C., writes Adam Liptak of *The New York Times*, spurred the interest of the judges "by publishing a series of articles on secret settlements by doctors repeatedly accused of medical malpractice." This, of course, was one of the most despicable consequences of secrecy—patients not being able to find out if their physician had killed others with his incompetence.

SPEAKING OF AN UNCRITICAL press, that $200 million in loans that the Redskins are financing for their owners that I questioned in our last issue has now been reported by *The Washington Post*, which joins *The Washington Times* in failing to ask why the money is not being used to reduce ticket prices or to acquire better players. The *Post* has reported that the Redskins' player payroll, which once was huge, now ranks in the NFL's lower half. So why doesn't the *Post* think to ask why that money isn't being used for players, if not for the fans?

AS ONE WHO IS always being gulled by food producers who claim that I can have my cake and eat it, too—I hate to tell you how many low-fat cookies I consumed, until I looked at the calorie count—I know I'm the mark for a new Frito-Lay product: "broccoli potato chips."

AFTER THE HEROISM OF 9/11 there has been an understandable tendency to glorify policemen and firemen and to minimize their shortcomings. That's why I welcomed *Washington City Paper*'s "Insider's Guide to Real Policing." The tone is evident from the first sentence: "It's a job that connects all your favorite pastimes—sitting around, eating, bullying, writing incomplete sentences."

The article is full of tips on how to be one of the 90 percent who avoid real policing: Be one of the cops who arrive late, after the eager ones have actually dealt with the crime. "Circle the block or collar a jaywalker" so you don't get there too soon. By arriving late you can "set out orange cones, light flares, and shoo away nosy old ladies" and seem a busy participant at the

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scene of the crime. You don't even have to do anything if you master the technique of standing around with hands on hips and looking like you're thinking about doing something.

Washington, like most cities, has a chain of convenience stores called 7-Eleven. "At any given point," observes *City Paper*'s Jason Cherkis, "you will find a group of blue hanging out at a 'Sev' somewhere in the city." My own observation is that at any given moment you will find D.C. cops hanging out at practically every 7-Eleven in the city.

Why should Uncle Sam give his business to companies that evade his taxes?

"Riding around in your cruiser with the windows rolled down and the AC cranked" is another observation from which I would partially dissent. I often see cruisers with their windows rolled up and two cops inside so engrossed in conversation with one another that they are unlikely to see a crime being committed or hear the terrified screams of the victim.

WE MENTIONED THE OBSTACLE that sealed settlements pose to patients seeking information about doctors' pasts. Another roadblock has been the failure of state medical societies and licensing boards to inform consumers about malpractice records. One state might publish information about disciplinary actions taken by that state, but not by others. Thus, Virginia's Web site shows Dr. Robert Michael Altman, a Fairfax psychiatrist, as having had his license restored after losing it for having had sex with patients and being hospitalized twice for "severe mental disorder." But, *The Washington Post*'s Sandra Boodman reports, the Virginia site does not note that Maryland has denied Altman's request to reinstate the license he held there.

The federal government does have a National Practitioners Data Bank that lists disciplinary and malpractice information from every state. That information, however, is only available to hospitals. The self-protectors of the medical profession made sure that the public can't get a peek. At last, a St. George appears to be doing something about this dreadful state of affairs. Ralph Nader's longtime associate Dr. Sidney Wolfe, who heads the Public Citizen Health Research Group, has established a Web site, www.questionabledoctors.org, which combines malpractice records from 27 states, including Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. Wolfe hopes to have all states included by the end of the year.

COME TO THINK OF IT, WE can't give that field marshal title to Paul Wolfowitz. What would be left for Richard Perle? Perle is the chairman of the Defense Policy Board, which meets privately with Donald Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and other Pentagon biggies to make sure their already hawkish views are reinforced by the subtle and not-so-subtle threats—e.g., the one to Bush cited here last month—that are Perle's specialty. Perle even straightens out foreign leaders who stray from his true path. He recently told a German newspaper that Gerhard Schroeder "should retire" because his reservations about joining in the war against Iraq have "severely damaged" German-American relations.

MY HOMETOWN PAPER, THE *Charleston Gazette*, recently looked at how much time pupils are spending on school buses in West Virginia's rural counties. The *Gazette* found that more than two-thirds of elementary school children spend more than the legal limit of 30 minutes each way every day. One-third of the high school students spend more than an hour each way every day, their young lungs inhaling diesel fumes all the way. Many of the long trips are the result of small schools having been consolidated into big ones. But, as the *Gazette* reported a while back (see Tilting, March 2002), the smaller schools were doing a better job of educating their kids. So how is the problem to be solved? West Virginia is clearly a poor state. Now you understand why we need federal aid for schools.

HERE'S ANOTHER THING THE Redskins could do with the money they're using to finance loans to the team's owners. Get rid of those Smirnoff Ice ads. The background for press conferences held by the team's coaches and players traditionally was the team's logo. Now the logo alternates with ads for Smirnoff. This is nothing more than a way of brainwashing kids—who, after all, are a large part of the audiences for these conferences—with the brand name of a famous vodka maker.

I KNOW *The Weekly Standard* WILL accuse me of class warfare for pointing this out, but did you know that if, according to *The New York Times*, a GE executive uses the company's jet to fly from New York to Paris, the cost to the company will be $14,700, but the cost to the executive will only be the $456 he will owe in additional income tax?

CLASS ACTIONS CAN BE A GOOD way to compensate a large number of people who have been similarly victimized by the same defendant. Unfortunately, some lawyers—the fellows who didn't get up for that 8:30 a.m. ethics session—have figured out how to enrich themselves at the expense of the victims. They

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will sue the corporate defendant in the name of thousands of victims, and then make sweetheart settlements under which they receive huge fees, but the victims get only pennies.

A recent class action against Ameritech produced an attorneys' bill of $971,000. What did the individual customers get? "The settlement would have given aggrieved consumers one month's free use of Ameritech's speed-dialing service," reports *The Washington Post*'s Caroline Mayer, who adds, "Consumers would have had to pay for subsequent use of the speed-dialing service unless they called to cancel."

In this case the lawyers didn't get away with it. Attorneys general from five states, as well as the Federal Trade Commission, objected. The trial judge said the settlement "smacks of a court-sponsored promotion gimmick."

The FTC is planning to challenge more "coupon" settlements like this one, under which the consumer usually only gets a small service that is dependent on his buying a more expensive one.

There's still another racket the FTC is trying to stop. It is where class-action lawyers piggyback on suits already brought by the FTC and try to charge for work that has actually been done by the staff of the FTC. In one case where the FTC had won $16 million for a company's customers, class-action attorneys got another $8 million. Then they tried to base their fee on the entire $24 million. After the FTC protested, Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson gave the lawyers a fee based on the $8 million only. All of this sounds like the FTC is on the right track. But I have to confess I fear Republican excess in the woodpile. Republicans have an unfortunate tendency to expand this kind of effort to include not only the bad class actions, but the good ones, too.

THIS ITEM IS DEDICATED TO students of the culture of bureaucracy. On Aug. 23, 2001, the FBI field office in New York sought approval from its Washington headquarters for an investigation of Khalid Almihdhar after there had been several months of disturbing reports about his activities. The lawyers at headquarters turned down the request. On 9/11, when an agent in the New York office found Almihdhar's name on the manifests of one of the crashed planes, according to *The Washington Post*, "he yelled angrily: 'This is the same Almihdhar we've been talking about for three months!'" His supervisor, trying to reassure him, answered, "We did everything by the book."

FANNIE MAE IS ONE OF THE nicer places to work around Washington. Since it enjoys government backing for its securities, it's pretty much a risk-free enterprise. Its employees, however, enjoy the job security of the civil service without the accompanying limitations on earnings. Their salaries and perks are generous, the work rarely onerous. If, for example, you have a colleague you don't like or don't want to talk to, there is a company-supplied "coach" who will act as intermediary between you and the guy you don't like, so that any unpleasant encounter can be avoided.

If this sounds absurd, know that it is only slightly more so than the widespread tendency in Washington for one bureaucratic unit in an organization to defer to another in order to avoid ruffling feathers. Why else did the FBI's counterterrorism people defer to their law unit and deny the requests from Minneapolis and New York that might have prevented 9/11?

THE GAO HAS DISCOVERED that four of the top 100 federal contractors are incorporated in tax-haven countries. Why should Uncle Sam give his business to companies that evade his taxes? Tyco International, Accenture, and Foster Wheeler each got roughly $200 million in federal contracts in 2001. McDermott International got a whopping $1.8 billion. Based in Panama, it gets away with a lot of nose-thumbing at the IRS. And it will probably continue to do so. Its Washington representative is Daddy Bush's pal, Brent Scowcroft.

The Washington Post DEVOTED one sentence on an inside page to Ted Kennedy's address at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies questioning George Bush's rush to war. The *Post* completely failed to cover the Senate Armed Forces hearing in which retired army and marine corps generals made cautionary statements about the war, and during which Kennedy also expressed his concern. All this was in Michael Getler's ombudsman column on the *Post*'s Oct. 6 editorial page. Incredibly, a *Post* front page story that same day headlined "9/11 Changed Equation For Democrats, 1991's Doves Now Back War" failed to mention the Kennedy stand, even though he had been one of the 1991 doves.

TWO OTHER SENATORS WHO DEserve notice: Bob Graham, the Florida Democrat who used his power as chairman of the intelligence committee to force the disclosure of the CIA report that revealed the embarrassingly slender evidence supporting Bush's rush to war; and Robert Byrd, who kept asking, "Why now? Why before the election?" and eloquently reminded his colleagues of their duty to go home and consult their constituents before taking the momentous step of giving the president a free hand for war. Byrd can make a fool of himself from time to time, but he can rise to heights rarely attained by his fellow senators. He and I began as adversaries—I was for John Kennedy, he for Lyndon Johnson—in the politicking before the 1960 Democratic convention. But I have long since come to have immense admiration for his good qualities.

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The Myth of Cyberterrorism

There are many ways terrorists can kill you—computers aren't one of them.

BY JOSHUA GREEN

AGAIN AND AGAIN SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and senior administration officials have alerted the public not only to the dangers of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons but also to the further menace of cyberterrorism. "Terrorists can sit at one computer connected to one network and can create worldwide havoc," warned Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge in a representative observation last April. "[They] don't necessarily need a bomb or explosives to cripple a sector of the economy, or shut down a power grid."

Even before September 11, Bush was fervently depicting an America imminently in danger of an attack by cyberterrorists, warning during his presidential campaign that "American forces are overused and underfunded precisely when they are confronted by a host of new threats and challenges—the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the rise of cyberterrorism, the proliferation of missile technology." In other words, the country is confronted not just by the specter of terrorism, but by a menacing new breed of it that is technologically advanced, little understood, and difficult to defend against. Since September 11, these concerns have only multiplied. A survey of 725 cities conducted by the National League of Cities for the anniversary of the attacks shows that cyberterrorism ranks with biological and chemical weapons atop officials' lists of fears.

Concern over cyberterrorism is particularly acute in Washington. As is often the case with a new threat, an entire industry has arisen to grapple with its ramifications—think tanks have launched new projects and issued white papers, experts have testified to its dangers before Congress, private companies have hastily deployed security consultants and software designed to protect public and private targets, and the media have trumpeted the threat with such front-page headlines as this one, in *The Washington Post* last June: "Cyber-Attacks by Al Qaeda Feared, Terrorists at Threshold of Using Internet as Tool of Bloodshed, Experts Say."

The federal government has requested $4.5 billion for infrastructure security next year; the FBI boasts more than 1,000 "cyber investigators"; President Bush and Vice President Cheney keep the issue before the public; and in response to September 11, Bush created the office of "cybersecurity czar" in the White House, naming to this position Richard Clarke, who has done more than anyone to raise awareness, including warning that "if an attack comes today with information warfare ... it would be much, much worse than Pearl Harbor."

It's no surprise, then, that cyberterrorism now ranks alongside other weapons of mass destruction in the public consciousness. Americans have had a latent fear of catastrophic computer attack ever since a teenage Matthew Broderick hacked into the Pentagon's nuclear weapons system and nearly launched World War III in the 1983 movie *WarGames*. Judging by official alarums and newspaper headlines, such scenarios are all the more likely in today's wired world.

There's just one problem: There is no such thing as cyberterrorism—no instance of anyone ever having been killed by a terrorist (or anyone else) using a computer. Nor is there compelling evidence that al Qaeda or any other terrorist organization has resorted to computers for any sort

JOSHUA GREEN *is an editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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of serious destructive activity. What's more, outside of a Tom Clancy novel, computer security specialists believe it is virtually impossible to use the Internet to inflict death on a large scale, and many scoff at the notion that terrorists would bother trying. "I don't lie awake at night worrying about cyberattacks ruining my life," says Dorothy Denning, a computer science professor at Georgetown University and one of the country's foremost cybersecurity experts. "Not only does [cyberterrorism] not rank alongside chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, but it is not anywhere near as serious as other potential physical threats like car bombs or suicide bombers."

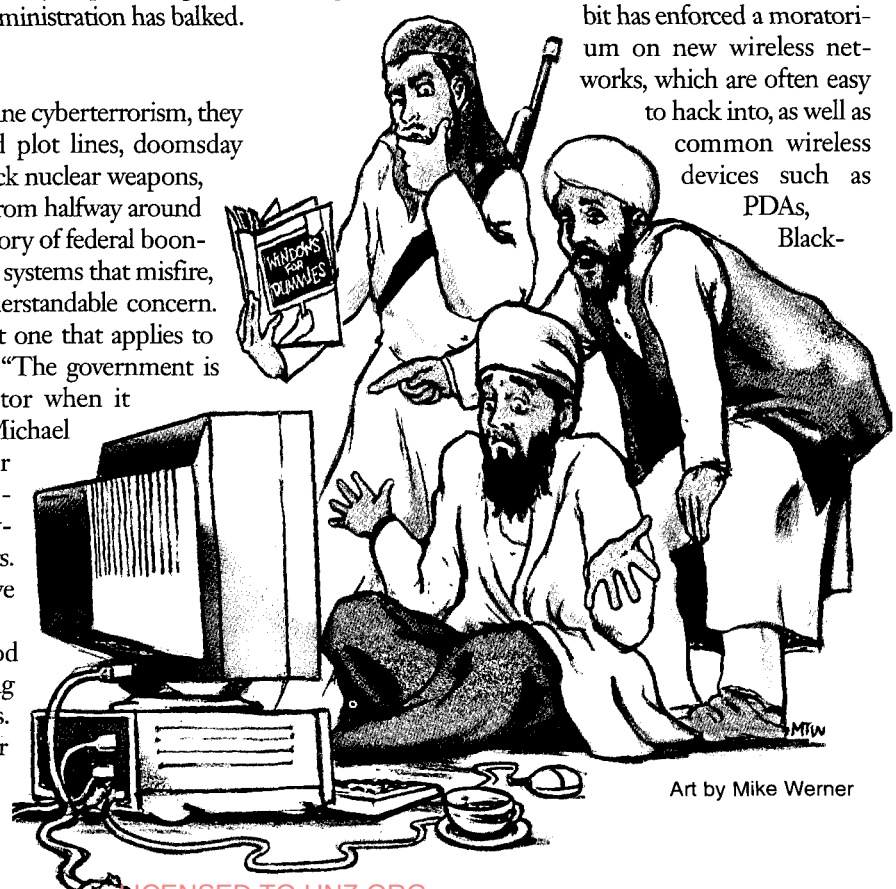
Which is not to say that cybersecurity isn't a serious problem—it's just not one that involves terrorists. Interviews with terrorism and computer security experts, and current and former government and military officials, yielded near unanimous agreement that the real danger is from the criminals and other hackers who did $15 billion in damage to the global economy last year using viruses, worms, and other readily available tools. That figure is sure to balloon if more isn't done to protect vulnerable computer systems, the vast majority of which are in the private sector. Yet when it comes to imposing the tough measures on business necessary to protect against the real cyberthreats, the Bush administration has balked.

Crushing BlackBerrys

When ordinary people imagine cyberterrorism, they tend to think along Hollywood plot lines, doomsday scenarios in which terrorists hijack nuclear weapons, airliners, or military computers from halfway around the world. Given the colorful history of federal boondoggles—billion-dollar weapons systems that misfire, $600 toilet seats—that's an understandable concern. But, with few exceptions, it's not one that applies to preparedness for a cyberattack. "The government is miles ahead of the private sector when it comes to cybersecurity," says Michael Cheek, director of intelligence for iDefense, a Virginia-based computer security company with government and private-sector clients. "Particularly the most sensitive military systems."

Serious effort and plain good fortune have combined to bring this about. Take nuclear weapons. The biggest fallacy about their vulnerability, promoted in action thrillers like *WarGames*, is that they're designed for remote operation. "[The movie] is premised on the assumption that there's a modem bank hanging on the side of the computer that controls the missiles," says Martin Libicki, a defense analyst at the RAND Corporation. "I assure you, there isn't." Rather, nuclear weapons and other sensitive military systems enjoy the most basic form of Internet security: they're "air-gapped," meaning that they're not physically connected to the Internet and are therefore inaccessible to outside hackers. (Nuclear weapons also contain "permissive action links," mechanisms to prevent weapons from being armed without inputting codes carried by the president.) A retired military official was somewhat indignant at the mere suggestion: "As a general principle, we've been looking at this thing for 20 years. What cave have you been living in if you haven't considered this [threat]?"

When it comes to cyberthreats, the Defense Department has been particularly vigilant to protect key systems by isolating them from the Net and even from the Pentagon's internal network. All new software must be submitted to the National Security Agency for security testing. "Terrorists could not gain control of our spacecraft, nuclear weapons, or any other type of high-consequence asset," says Air Force Chief Information Officer John Gilligan. For more than a year, Pentagon CIO John Stenbit has enforced a moratorium on new wireless networks, which are often easy to hack into, as well as common wireless devices such as PDAs, Black-



Art by Mike Werner

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Berrys, and even wireless or infrared copiers and faxes.

The September 11 hijackings led to an outcry that airliners are particularly susceptible to cyberterrorism. Earlier this year, for instance, Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) described "the absolute havoc and devastation that would result if cyberterrorists suddenly shut down our air traffic control system, with thousands of planes in mid-flight." In fact, cybersecurity experts give some of their highest marks to the FAA, which reasonably separates its administrative and air traffic control systems and strictly air-gaps the latter. And there's a reason the 9/11 hijackers used box-cutters instead of keyboards: It's impossible to hijack a plane remotely, which eliminates the possibility of a high-tech 9/11 scenario in which planes are used as weapons.

Another source of concern is terrorist infiltration of our intelligence agencies. But here, too, the risk is slim. The CIA's classified computers are also air-gapped, as is the FBI's entire computer system. "They've been paranoid about this forever," says Libicki, adding that paranoia is a sound governing principle when it comes to cybersecurity. Such concerns are manifesting themselves in broader policy terms as well. One notable characteristic of last year's Quadrennial Defense Review was how strongly it focused on protecting information systems.

But certain tics in the way government agencies procure technology have also—entirely by accident—helped to keep them largely free of hackers. For years, agencies eschewed off-the-shelf products and insisted instead on developing proprietary systems, unique to their branch of government—a particularly savvy form of bureaucratic self-preservation. When, say, the Department of Agriculture succeeded in convincing Congress that it needed a specially designed system, both the agency and the contractor benefited. The software company was assured the agency's long-term business, which became dependent on its product; in turn, bureaucrats developed an expertise with the software that made them difficult to replace. This, of course, fostered colossal inefficiencies—agencies often couldn't communicate with each other, minor companies developed fiefdoms in certain agencies, and if a purveyor went bankrupt, the agency was left with no one to manage its technology. But it did provide a peculiar sort of protection: Outside a select few, no one understood these specific systems well enough to violate them. So in a sense, the famous inability of agencies like the FBI and INS to share information because of incompatible computer systems has yielded the inadvertent benefit of shielding them from attack.

Ankle Biters

That leaves the less-protected secondary targets—power grids, oil pipelines, dams, and water systems that don't present opportunities as nightmarish as do nuclear weapons, but nonetheless seem capable, under the wrong hands, of causing their own mass destruction. Because most of these systems are in the private sector and are not yet regarded as national security loopholes, they tend to be less secure than government and military systems. In addition, companies increasingly use the Internet to manage such processes as oil-pipeline flow and water levels in dams by means of "supervisory control and data acquisition" systems, or SCADA, which confers remote access. Most experts see possible vulnerability here, and though terrorists have never attempted to exploit it, media accounts often sensationalize the likelihood that they will.

To illustrate the supposed ease with which our enemies could subvert a dam, *The Washington Post*'s June story on al Qaeda cyberterrorism related an anecdote about a 12-year-old who hacked into the SCADA system at Arizona's Theodore Roosevelt Dam in 1998, and was, the article intimated, within mere keystrokes of unleashing millions of gallons of water upon helpless downstream communities. But a subsequent investigation by the tech-news site *CNet.com* revealed the tale to be largely apocryphal—the incident occurred in 1994, the hacker was 27, and, most importantly, investigators concluded that he couldn't have gained control of the dam and that no lives or property were ever at risk.

Most hackers break in simply for sport. To the extent that these hacks occur, they're mainly Web site defacements, which are a nuisance, but leave the intruder no closer to exploiting the system in any deadly way. Security experts dismiss such hackers as "ankle biters" and roll their eyes at prognostications of doom.

Of course, it's conceivable that a computer-literate terrorist truly intent on wreaking havoc could hack into computers at a dam or power company. But once inside, it would be far more difficult for him to cause significant damage than most people realize. "It's not the difficulty of doing it," says RAND's Libicki. "It's the difficulty of doing it and having any real consequence." "No one explains precisely the how, whys, and wherefores of these apocalyptic scenarios," says George Smith, the editor of *Crypt Newsletter*, which covers computer security issues. "You always just get the assumption that chemical plants can be made to explode, that the water supply can be polluted—things that are even hard to do physically are suddenly assumed to be elementary because of the prominence of the Internet."

Few besides a company's own employees possess the specific technical know-how required to run a specialized SCADA system. The most commonly cited example of SCADA exploitation bears this out. Two years ago,

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an Australian man used an Internet connection to release a million gallons of raw sewage along Queensland's Sunshine Coast after being turned down for a government job. When police arrested him, they discovered that he'd worked for the company that designed the sewage treatment plant's control software. This is true of most serious cybersecurity breaches—they tend to come from insiders. It was Robert Hanssen's familiarity with the FBI's computer system that allowed him to exploit it despite its security. In both cases, the perpetrators weren't terrorists but rogue employees with specialized knowledge difficult, if not impossible, for outsiders to acquire—a security concern, but not one attributable to cyberterrorism.

Terrorists might, in theory, try to recruit insiders. But even if they succeeded, the degree of damage they could cause would still be limited. Most worst-case scenarios (particularly those put forth by government) presuppose that no human beings are keeping watch to intervene if something goes wrong. But especially in the case of electrical power grids, oil and gas utilities, and communications companies, this is simply untrue. Such systems get hit all the time by hurricanes, floods, or tornadoes, and company employees are well rehearsed in handling the fallout. This is equally true when the trouble stems from human action. Two years ago in California, energy companies like Enron and El Paso Corp. conspired to cause power shortages that led to brownouts and blackouts—the same effects cyberterrorists would wreak. As Smith points out, "There were no newspaper reports of people dying as a result of the blackouts. No one lost their mind." The state suffered only minor (if demoralizing) inconvenience.

But perhaps the best indicator of what is realistic came last July when the U.S. Naval War College contracted with a research group to simulate a massive attack on the nation's information infrastructure. Government hackers and security analysts gathered in Newport, R.I., for a war game dubbed "Digital Pearl Harbor." The result? The hackers failed to crash the Internet, though they did cause serious sporadic damage. But, according to a *CNet.com* report, officials concluded that terrorists hoping to stage such an attack "would require a syndicate with significant resources, including $200 million, country-level intelligence and five years of preparation time."

Hack Attack

Despite all the media alarm about terrorists poised on the verge of cyberattack, intelligence suggests that they're doing no more than emailing and surfing for potential targets. When U.S. troops recovered al Qaeda laptops in Afghanistan, officials were surprised to find its members more technologically adept than previously believed. They discovered structural and engineering software, electronic models of a dam, and information on computerized water systems, nuclear power plants, and U.S. and European stadiums. But nothing suggested they were planning cyberattacks, only that they were using the Internet to communicate and coordinate physical attacks. "There doesn't seem to be any evidence that the people we know as terrorists like to do cyberterrorism," says Libicki. Indeed, in a July report to the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee detailing the threats detected to critical infrastructure, the General Accounting Office noted "to date none of the traditional terrorist groups such as al Qaeda have used the Internet to launch a known assault on the U.S.'s infrastructure." It is much easier, and almost certainly much deadlier, to strike the old-fashioned way.

Bush has created the conditions for what amounts to war profiteering—frightening businesses into investing in security, but refusing to force the changes necessary to make software safe and effective.

Government computers have been targeted by politically minded hackers, but these attacks are hardly life threatening. They're typified by last October's penetration of a Defense Department Web site dedicated to "Operation Enduring Freedom" and, somewhat incongruously, a Web server operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. The organization responsible was called the "al Qaeda Alliance Online" and was comprised of groups with names like GForce Pakistan and the Pakistani Hackerz Club—names that connote a certain adolescent worship of hip-hop that's a clue to the participants' relative lack of menace; none turned out to have actual terrorist ties.

In both cases, the attackers replaced the government sites' home pages with photos and anti-American text—but that's all they did. Robbed of this context, as is usually the case with reports of politically motivated cyberattacks, such manifestations are often presumed to be much more serious terrorist threats than is warranted. "When somebody defaces a Web site, it's roughly

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equivalent to spray painting something rude on the outside of a building," says James Lewis, director of technology policy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "It's really just electronic graffiti."

The Gloom Boom

Yet Washington hypes cyberterrorism incessantly. "Cyberterrorism and cyberattacks are sexy right now. It's novel, original, it captures people's imagination," says Georgetown's Denning. Indeed, a peculiar sort of one-upmanship has developed when describing the severity of the threat. The most popular term, "electronic Pearl Harbor," was coined in 1991 by an alarmist tech writer named Winn Schwartau to hype a novel. For a while, in the mid-1990s, "electronic Chernobyl" was in vogue. Earlier this year, Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) warned of a looming "digital Armageddon." And the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank, has christened its own term, "digital Waterloo."

Why all this brooding over so relatively minor a threat? Ignorance is one reason. Cyberterrorism merges two spheres—terrorism and technology—that most lawmakers and senior administration officials don't fully understand and therefore tend to fear, making them likelier to accede to any measure, if only out of self-preservation. Just as tellingly, many are eager to exploit this ignorance. Numerous technology companies, still reeling from the collapse of the tech bubble, have recast themselves as innovators crucial to national security and boosted their Washington presence in an effort to attract federal dollars. As Ohio State University law professor Peter Swire explained to *Mother Jones*, "Many companies that rode the dot-com boom need to find big new sources of income. One is direct sales to the federal government; another is federal mandates. If we have a big federal push for new security spending, that could prop up the sagging market."

But lately, a third motive has emerged: Stoking fears of cyberterrorism helps maintain the level of public anxiety about terrorism generally, which in turn makes it easier for the administration to pass its agenda.

Profit of Doom

At the center of all this hype is Richard Clarke, special adviser to the president for cyberspace security, a veteran of four administrations, and terrorism czar to Bill Clinton. Even though he was a senior Clinton official, Clarke's legendary bureaucratic skills saw him through the transition; and when replaced by Gen. Wayne Downing after September 11, Clarke created for himself the position of cybersecurity czar and continued heralding the threat of cyberattack. Understanding that in Washington attention leads to resources and power, Clarke quickly raised the issue's profile. "Dick has an ability to scare the bejesus out of everybody and to make the bureaucracy jump," says a former colleague. The Bush administration has requested a 64 percent increase in cybersecurity funds for next year.

Last month, I paid Clarke a visit in his office a few blocks west of the White House to talk about the threat and discovered that even he is beginning to wilt under the false pretense of cyberterrorism. As I was led back to meet him, his assistant made an odd request: "Mr. Clarke doesn't like to talk about the source of the threat, he'd rather focus on the vulnerability." And indeed, the man who figured most prominently in hyping the issue seemed particularly ill at ease discussing it.

Clarke is in the curious bind of an expert on terrorism charged to protect the nation against a form of the disease that has yet to appear. But he is smart enough to understand that one very real cybersecurity threat is unfolding: the damage, largely economic, being done by hackers and criminals. Last year, 52,000 cyberattacks were reported, up from 21,000 the year before. Yet Clarke's greatest leverage is misperception about the true source of this threat. In his careful way, he tried to guide our conversation away from terrorism and toward cybersecurity.

"To date," he readily conceded, "we've never seen any of the officially designated terrorist groups engage in a cyberattack against us." But he stressed that little noticed in the aftermath of September 11 was a large-scale cyberattack seven days later—the Nimda virus—that proved extremely costly to private industry. "Nimda hit a lot of businesses that thought they had done a good job securing themselves," Clarke explained. "And a lot of CEOs got really pissed because they thought they had spent a lot of time and money doing cybersecurity for the company and—bang!—they got hammered, knocked offline, their records got destroyed, and it cost millions of dollars per company." The $15 billion in damage caused by cyberattacks last year is derived mostly from worms, viruses, denial-of-service attacks, and theft, all of which capitalized on the generally lax cybersecurity in the private-sector businesses that comprise about 85 percent of the Internet. Many vulnerabilities are imported through the use of products by private companies, such as Microsoft, that supply software. There is no regulatory mechanism to ensure that they meet security standards; and as Clarke notes, "there's no legal liability if you are the software manufacturer and sell somebody something that doesn't work."

He also pointed out that a typical company devotes one-quarter of 1 percent of its information technology budget to cybersecurity, "slightly less than they spend on

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coffee." By contrast, the Bush administration's FY 2003 budget would spend 8 percent, or 32 times higher a proportion. Yet even this considerable outlay doesn't guarantee that the government's systems are secure. The same poorly written and configured software that plagues private industry also hampers government computers—the federal government is, after all, Microsoft's largest customer. John Gilligan, the Air Force CIO and one of the fiercest advocates of stronger safety standards in government, says that 80 percent of successful penetrations of federal computer systems can be attributed to software full of bugs, trapdoors, and "Easter eggs"—programming errors and quirks inserted into the code (see box) that could leave software vulnerable to hackers. What's more, as federal agencies move away from proprietary systems toward universal software, this becomes a greater problem not just in terms of security, but also of cost. "The assessment I make is that we're fast approaching the point at which we're spending more money to find, patch, and correct vulnerabilities than we paid for the software," says Gilligan.

Bad for Business

The danger of hyping a threat like cyberterrorism is that once the exaggeration becomes clear, the public will grow cynical toward warnings about real threats. The Chicken Little approach might be excusable were the Bush administration hyping cyberterrorism in order to build political momentum for dealing with the true problem posed by hackers and shoddy software. There is a precedent for this sort of thing. In the midst of all the anxiety about the Y2K bug, the federal government and the SEC came up with a novel way to ensure that private companies were ready: They required businesses to disclose their preparations to shareholders, setting goals and letting market forces do the rest.

There were high hopes, then, for the Bush administration's National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace—the culmination of a year's effort to address the country's post-9/11 cybersecurity problems. Clarke's team circulated early drafts that contained what most experts considered to be solid measures for shoring up security in government, business, and home computers. But the business community got word that the plan contained tough (read: potentially costly) prescriptions, and petitioned the White House, which gutted them. When a draft of the plan was rolled out in mid-September, Bill Conner, president of the computer security firm Entrust, told *The Washington Post*, "It looks as though a Ph.D. wrote the government items, but it reads like someone a year out of grade school wrote the rest of the plan."

It's hard to imagine a worse outcome for all involved, even private industry. By knuckling under to the business community's anti-regulatory impulses, Bush produced a weak plan that ultimately leaves the problem of cybersecurity to persist. It proposes no regulations, no legislation, and stops well short of even the Y2K approach, prompting most security experts to dismiss it out of hand. What it does do instead is continue the stream of officially sanctioned scaremongering about cyberattack, much to the delight of software companies. IT security remains one of the few bright spots in the depressed tech market and thus that important sector of the market is perfectly satisfied with the status quo. But as the Nimda virus proved, even companies that pay for security software (and oppose government standards) don't realize just how poorly it protects them. So in effect, the Bush administration has created the conditions for what amounts to war profiteering—frightening businesses into investing in security, but refusing to force the changes necessary to make software safe and effective.

The way the Bush White House has exaggerated the likelihood of cyberterrorism is familiar to anyone who's followed its style of government. This is an administration that will frequently proclaim a threat (the Saddam/al Qaeda connection, for instance) in order to forward its broader agenda, only to move on nonchalantly when evidence proves elusive or nonexistent. But in this case, by moving on, Bush leaves unaddressed something that really *is* a problem—just not one that suits the administration's interests. Forced to choose between increasing security and pleasing his business base, the president has chosen the latter. Hyping a threat that doesn't exist while shrinking from one that does is no way to protect the country.

There is, for instance, an entire videogame secretly embedded in Microsoft Excel 2000. "Spy Hunter," a shoot-'em-up driving game, in which race cars zoom down a highway, maneuvering around oil slicks and other obstacles, can be opened with a few keystrokes.

To find the game: Under File menu, click "Save as Web Page," then "Selection: Sheet" and "Publish." Next, choose "Add Interactivity" and save to an .htm page on your drive. Load the .htm page with Internet Explorer. You should see Excel in the center of the page. Scroll down to row 2000, and tab across so that WC is the active column. Hold down "Shift" and press the space bar to highlight the WC cell. Then simultaneously depress Shift + Crtl + Alt and click the four-color "Office" logo in the upper-left-hand corner. If you have the original Excel 2000, the game will appear. Use the arrow keys to drive, spacebar to fire, "O" to drop oil slicks, and "H" for your headlights when it gets dark.

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You Break It, You Pay For It

How special interests can serve the cause of campaign finance reform.

BY PAUL WEINSTEIN JR.

DESPITE THE WIDELY HAILED PASSAGE of the McCain-Feingold bill earlier this year—the first campaign finance-reform measure in a generation—it's no secret that money still dominates our elections. When you consider all that it takes to run for public office at the national level these days—expensive political consultants, pollsters, and the growing cost of producing and broadcasting television and radio ads—the cost of a campaign adds up quickly. And that cost is rising. House and Senate candidates spent approximately $2 billion during the 2000 election, and all indications are that the tab for the 2004 elections will far surpass that. As of early October, President Bush had already shattered previous fundraising records by collecting more than $140 million.

As campaign spending has mushroomed, special interests have purchased ever-greater influence. Last year, for example, Congress passed a $73-billion farm-bailout bill. And while farmers are an important political constituency, the lion's share of the bill's benefits didn't accrue to the small independent farmers who need it most—they went to the massive agribusiness farms that are, not coincidentally, among the most generous special interests when it comes to giving cash to candidates and their political action committees (PACs).

There are many proposals to fix our campaign-finance system, but each has serious flaws. Many European nations successfully limit the amount of money campaigns can spend, but in the United States, the Supreme Court in *Buckley v. Valeo* declared this practice unconstitutional. There's the idea of banning or capping contributions—but as we've discovered, these are easily circumvented. Already, lawyers for both parties are scrambling to find loopholes in the ban on "soft money" that was the leading provision of McCain-Feingold, intended to prohibit unregulated large contributions to political parties. The latest innovation is to direct soft-money contributions from business, labor unions, and other wealthy special interests to state party organizations (which can still receive soft money donations) and to establish "mini-parties"—front organizations set up on behalf of national parties to evade the soft-money ban.

Then there's public financing. Since the Watergate scandal, public interest groups have championed the idea of publicly financed campaigns, in which candidates receive taxpayer money in exchange for adhering to voluntary campaign spending limits. (Only presidential candidates can qualify for public funding—paid for by the $3 box you can check off on your tax return.) In the past, this helped to level the playing field between incumbents and chal-

PAUL WEINSTEIN JR. *is a senior fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute and teaches at Johns Hopkins University. He is co-author of* The Art of Policy Making.

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lengers: Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and George H.W. Bush all lost their reelection bids to publicly financed candidates.

Reformers have long wanted to take the next logical step and employ public financing not just in presidential contests but in House and Senate races, too. Purely as a matter of policy, the idea makes sense. In addition to limiting the influence of special interests in Congress, it would allow lawmakers and candidates to spend more time on the stump talking about issues, and less time on the phone dialing for dollars. It would also eliminate much of the need for sitting presidents to spend every third day traveling around the country attending congressional fundraisers (a practice Bill Clinton perfected and George W. Bush has taken to new levels of excess). Unfortunately, no one has ever come up with a politically practical way to pay for public financing of congressional general election campaigns. The roughly $250 million raised by the voluntary check-off barely covers the cost of presidential races, and, though the amount was increased from $1 to $3 to make up for the declining number of contributions, the percentage of taxpayers who choose to contribute has dropped from a high of almost 29 percent in 1980 to 12.5 percent in 1997 (the most recent year for which figures are available). The government could, in theory, tap general revenues for this purpose. But the notion of taxing voters to pay for congressional campaigns is one for which lawmakers have understandably shown minimal enthusiasm.

All of which suggests that we need a new way to achieve public financing for congressional races. And I have an idea—one that would be popular with average Americans because it won't cost them a dime. Special interests are the biggest beneficiaries of the current campaign finance system, so why not make them pay to clean it up? Just as we tax gasoline to pay for road repairs, why not charge special interest groups fees to fix our campaign finance system by providing campaign funds to candidates who agree to forego other donations for the general election?

Special interests are the biggest beneficiaries of the current campaign finance system, so why not make them pay an annual fee to clean it up?

A Special-Interest Toll

Here's how it would work. Every lobbyist, political action committee, political consultant (yes, pollsters too), and government contractor would be charged a fee, either once up front or on an annual basis. There are approximately 25,000 lobbyists, political consultants, and PACs in the United States, and more than 450,000 government contractors and vendors. An annual fee of, say, $2,000 would raise in excess of $1.9 billion every election cycle, more than enough to cover the general election cost of every House and Senate race. This money would be placed in what I'd call a "Democracy Endowment" (with full credit to Al Gore, who coined the term). This endowment would be an independent entity administered by a board of trustees nominated every five years by the president and approved by the Senate. Any candidates for federal office who agreed not to accept other sources of funding would be able to tap this endowment to pay for their campaign.

The precise amount of public funds individual candidates would receive would be based on a combination of factors, including the average cost of previous House and Senate campaigns and the cost of advertising in particular districts or states. Since the program would be voluntary—if it were mandatory it would be unconstitutional—candidates could choose not to participate and instead finance a campaign with private contributions or their own personal wealth, as Sens. Jon Corzine (D-N.Y.) and Peter Fitzgerald (R-Ill.) have both done under the current campaign finance system. In order to discourage superrich candidates from opting out of participation in the Democracy Endowment and trying to buy an election, trustees could supplement the amount of money given to participating candidates who have to go up against a rich or privately funded opponent. Of course that leaves one important practical question: How on earth do you pass a law that every lobbyist and industry trade group in Washington would seem sure to oppose?

The answer is that a surprising number of special interests might, in fact, not oppose it. Here's

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In addition to limiting the influence of special interests in Congress, an annual fee would allow lawmakers and candidates to spend more time on the stump talking about issues, and less time on the phone dialing for dollars.

why: Corporations like certainty; they want to know the bottom line. Businesses participate in the current system out of necessity, but by and large would prefer a system in which they paid an established fee to ensure themselves access instead of one in which they were constantly shaken down by political fundraisers. Indeed, some big businesses supported the McCain-Feingold soft money ban out of a strong desire to end the growing number of "requests" from politicians for more and more money.

Others will support this approach to cleanse their conscience. While some lobbyists are in the business just to make piles of money, others are former Hill staffers and government employees who originally came to Washington to serve the American public. Many of these folks believe in the causes they are advocating, and would be much happier arguing over the merits of a particular bill or regulation than they would over the sum of money they have to contribute to someone's campaign to get their issue heard. Moreover, most lobbyists—who rank somewhere between lawyers and ivory smugglers in the minds of most Americans—would love a chance to rehabilitate their image. It's hard to imagine now, but once, lobbying on behalf of certain causes and professional organizations was considered an honorable profession. Its importance was so significant that de Tocqueville argued that "in democratic countries the science of association is the mother of science; the progress of all the rest depends upon the progress it has made." My proposal would allow lobbyists and lobbying associations to regain their public respect and return to their original mission, disseminating information and analyzing the impact of ideas on different sectors of society, rather than bribing politicians to support the political will of a few well-off individuals or groups.

Still not convinced? Then think about this. Back in the mid-1980s, no one believed that a small group of senators and representatives could take on an array of special interests and close major loopholes in the tax code. But these lawmakers succeeded by enlisting the support of the one group politicians are more beholden to than special interests: the taxpayers. By getting their bill to the floor of Congress and framing the vote as a choice between "regular people" and "special interests," they passed the Tax Reform Act of 1986; lawmakers were more fearful of voters' wrath than lobbyists' threats and cajoles. Sens. McCain and Feingold used a similar strategy to pass their soft money ban. Advocates of a special-interest-funded Democracy Endowment could employ similar tactics by enlisting the right political leadership and the support of the elite press.

Of course, even if lobbyists were to accept the idea of paying fees for public financing, they would surely fight to keep those fees as low as possible. But this urge, too, could be turned towards a noble end. For years, reformers have argued that political candidates should get free TV time to run campaign ads, in order to lower campaign costs and thereby reduce the need for special interest money. And for years, the broadcast industry, which makes a fortune from paid political advertising, has blocked the idea. But what if reform-minded lawmakers offered K Street a deal: We'll reduce the fees you will pay for public financing *if* we get free TV time? Suddenly, virtually every lobbyist, pollster, and contractor in town would have an incentive to lean on the broadcasters and on the lawmakers who support them to accept free TV time.

Together, these reforms surely wouldn't stop every campaign abuse. There will always be big-money donors eager to contribute to politicians, and clever politicians and lawyers will always find ways to skirt the rules in order to get that money. Getting all private money out of politics simply isn't an achievable goal. Nor is it a necessary one. The real goal ought to be to put as much distance as possible between wealthy special interests and elected officials who are supposed to act on behalf of the American people. The Democracy Endowment would do that, and it would do so without limiting free speech or starving campaigns of money. It's time for some political jujitsu—let's turn the biggest source of money politics into the handmaiden of reform. ●

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Doctor Who?

Scientists are treated as objective arbiters in the cloning debate. But most have serious skin in the game.

BY NEIL MUNRO

THERE'S HARDLY AN ISSUE MORE difficult to untangle—or more important to the future of science and medicine—than that of human cloning and stem cells. But for reporters charged with covering the debate, sorting out the questions involved is as difficult as explaining the science behind them.

There's one argument over whether the government should ban researchers from using embryos that are going to get thrown away at fertility clinics, on the claim that they are human lives even if they're going to be destroyed anyway. There's another, slightly different argument, over whether scientists should be allowed to clone adult cells to produce embryos, from which scientists can then extract embryonic stem cells—cells which could, in theory, be transplanted back into the original adult patient for different forms of therapy. There's still another dispute over whether adult stem cells are even viable alternatives in the event that use of embryonic stem cells is outlawed.

When covering these debates, reporters often try to use university scientists as objective arbiters. Politicians and interest groups may be motivated by ideology, but the scientists—they presume—are sticking to the facts. But the funny thing is, scientists don't necessarily agree about the facts. For instance, David Prentice, a biologist at Indiana State University, has been quoted in dozens of newspaper articles as an advocate for the position that you can limit the use of embryonic stem cells without hurting scientific research. And then there's somebody like Irving Weisman, a Stanford scientist and past chair of a prestigious panel on cloning at the National Academy of Sciences, who's been quoted in over 160 newspaper articles in recent years defending the opposite position—that embryonic stem cells are essential to future advances in medical science and technology.

Part of the explanation, of course, is simply an honest difference of opinion among scientists grappling with difficult emerging questions. But there's a deeper problem at work which journalists overwhelmingly ignore: These supposedly objective scientists have business interests that overlap with their scientific views. For instance, Prentice specializes in studying stem cells taken from adults, not embryos, and has sought a federal grant from the National Institutes of Health for his work; federal curbs on embryo research would "obviously" free more funds for his approach, he says, and if his research pans out, Prentice will market the resulting procedures via a biotech company—a company which would have better prospects were embryo-cell cloning outlawed by the government. By the same token, Weissman has already made millions of dollars through three companies he's founded—Systemix Inc., Celltrans Inc., and StemCells Inc., the last two of which he still helps manage—which use stem-cell technology. When President Bush announced last August that he would give narrow support to such technology, the market value of the StemCells Inc. briefly shot up by 45 percent.

NEIL MUNRO *covers the politics of the technology business for* National Journal.

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But these two scientists aren't the problem. Both Weissman and Prentice are entirely candid regarding their financial and business interest in the debate over cloning. Rather, the problem lies with the press, which almost never informs its readers that these supposedly disinterested scientists have great financial stakes in the debate. Prentice is invariably cited as an "Indiana State University biologist"; Weissman nearly always as "a professor at Stanford." And the same goes for dozens of other scientists who mix business and academia, substantially affecting the cloning debate in America and even abroad.

The Doctor Is In

Today, many university scientists are neither teachers nor disinterested experts, but a hybrid—part executive and part researcher—pursuing new and little-understood business strategies. Like most academics, they have university affiliations and spend most of their time performing research. But unlike, say, English professors, their research generates promising new medical patents and technologies, on which scientists can capitalize by launching their own off-campus biotech companies. These companies rarely sell therapies directly to patients. Instead they usually sell the fruits of their research—such as a gene-analysis device or a special type of laboratory animal—to large, established firms. Those larger firms buy their patented research in the hope they can be drawn upon to produce products or therapies for the consumer market. The research performed by academic entrepreneurs thus acts as a kind of catalyst on the broader field of biotechnology, which means that everyone involved—the entrepreneurs, universities, investors, and the firms who license patented technologies—prefer that it be as unrestricted as possible. In this context, stem-cell cloning is especially valuable, both as a commercial technique in and of itself and as a tool that can accelerate research into a myriad of human conditions, from male-pattern baldness to Lou Gehrig's disease.

By keeping one foot in business and one in the university, these scientist-businessmen get the best from both worlds. As academics, they get plaudits from their peers, the approval of colleagues serving on federal grant-review boards, and early access to hot new discoveries—not to mention federally subsidized laboratory space and an endless supply of underpaid graduate students eager to help develop the next cutting-edge idea. As entrepreneurs, they get access to wealth and the investment capital needed to launch a first, second, or third company.

These academic entrepreneurs are not exotic creatures, but rather the model of what university science is rapidly becoming. Since 1980, according to the Association of University Technology Managers, American universities have spun-off more than 3,000 companies. From 1999 to 2000 alone, universities' revenues from spin-off companies, licensing deals, and outside investment shot up from $862 million to $1.26 billion.

Spin Doctors

But reporters almost always fail to identify the conflicts of interest that such a business environment spawns, especially when it comes to the cloning debate. Take Harvard's Doug Melton, who has founded two biotech companies, including Curis Inc., where he is the chief scientist overseeing the development of stem-cell products, including potential therapies that could use embryo cloning. Not surprisingly, Melton is an outspoken advocate of federal support for embryonic stem-cell research, and was one of three experts invited by the White House to brief President Bush last year on the merits of such research. But in 35 out of 36 articles published since January 2000 citing Melton's support for embryonic stem-cell research, reporters described him only as a Harvard professor; not a single article on Lexis-Nexis cited his work at Curis, other than one I wrote for the *National Journal.*

In one July 2001 *Washington Post* article, the paper's chief science writer, Rick Weiss, quoted Melton saying "it would be very ill-advised to close the door on the production of new [stem-]cell lines." But Weiss described Melton only as "chairman of molecular and cellular biology at Harvard University." There was no mention of Curis, even though if Bush had chosen to come out against embryonic stem-cell research, Melton's firm would have had great difficulty raising investment capital. Weiss denies it's a problem. "Melton has a son who has diabetes," he says. "Should I mention in every story that he has a son with diabetes? I don't think so, but that's certainly one of his motivations, and for all I know, it is a greater motivation than profit from his membership of the board of Curis."

The Washington Times has made similar omissions. In nine articles during 2000 and 2001, reporter August Gribbin quoted Lawrence Goldstein, whom he described as a professor at the University of California at San Diego. In an August 2001 article, Goldstein defended cloning for therapies, and wondered whether a ban might violate the Constitution. "Does the gov-

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ernment really have the constitutional ability," he asked Gribbin, "to prohibit across the board something that has no obvious harm to people, but could benefit those who are ill?" This is, of course, a perfectly defensible position. But readers might rightly question Goldstein's motives for offering it if they knew of his role as co-founder of Cytokinetics Inc., a biotech firm in San Diego, or his role as a lobbyist on behalf of the American Society for Cell Biology. Why do these connections matter? Cytokinetics examines human cells for features that could be developed into drugs and therapies for pharmaceutical firms, and so relies on a high pace of discoveries in the field of human cells—discoveries that advocates believe can be accelerated through wide laboratory use of stem cells. The ASCB, which promotes public policies favored by scientists based in companies and universities, favors stem-cell research for similar reasons. But when I asked Gribbin why, he explained that "it was not a business story" and that "I was writing about the news of the day ... there was no time or intent to [include his financial interests]." Gribbin is not alone: Only one out of 76 articles in various papers quoting Goldstein mentions his business ties.

The media's conception of scientists—as objective academics cocooned in the ivory tower—keeps reporters from informing readers of financial interests that may motivate scientists' advocacy.

Conversely, in another article, *The Washington Times* quoted Indiana State's David Prentice as an opponent of embryonic cloning, but without disclosing his financial interest in banning embryonic cloning techniques. When asked, Victor Morton, an editor at the *Times*, said the paper doesn't have a policy regarding university scientist's business ties, and usually reprinted wire-service copy as is.

Patent Medicine

Many scientists also have financial interests in the extension or revocation of patents held by their academic competitors on lucrative procedures or products. Harvard's medical school and related institutions, for instance, generated almost $20 million in 2001 from such biotech patents. But this is another area in which reporters are less than conscientious. For example, two top stem-cell researchers, James Thomson of the University of Wisconsin and John Gearhart of the Johns Hopkins University, won patents on the most widely used methods for extracting stem cells from human embryos and aborted fetuses. The revenue from those patents goes both to the two inventors and to their universities' deans, department chiefs, and many others. Should Congress decided to curb the use of Thomson and Gearhart's method, all of them stand to lose millions of dollars.

Yet when the *Chicago Tribune* ran a profile of Thomson in December 2001, reporters Ronald Kotulak and Peter Gorner depicted Thomson only as "a young, untenured veterinarian and Ph.D. molecular biologist ... in his lab at the University of Wisconsin," and then quoted him as saying "I think stem cells can revolutionize human medicine, but it's going to be a long, drawn-out process." This prediction is certainly plausible, and contains the appropriate caveat. But readers should also have been told that Thomson and his colleagues stand to make millions of dollars from their patent should embryonic stem-cell cloning come into wide use.

Gorner says he did not include Thomson's business interests because Thomson "is kind of an innocent" about the financial stakes in the debate. Gorner says he tries hard to include the financial aspects in his science stories, and has written a long piece detailing the finances of the medical center which holds Thomson's patent. In the *Tribune*, Gorner says, "we go to great lengths [to get the financial data because] it is just assumed that everyone in the [science] business is on the take, and they are shameless about it." But he concedes that most of the media's science reporters are very reluctant to question scientists about their financial interests, partly because such questions would threaten the reporters' access to cutting-edge science news. "My colleagues are suckers [for university-based entrepreneurs]. I don't give an inch."

One of the clearest of these kinds of mistakes was made by *The New York Times*' Nicholas Wade in an article on the discovery of a versatile new type of stem cell found in adults, known as "Multipotent Adult Progenitor Cells." Previously unknown, these cells can be mass-produced for researchers, and may prove very useful for disease therapies. Wade described their discovery by Catherine Verfaillie, a professor at the Uni-

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versity of Minnesota, as a significant advance, and then included comments from Stanford's Weissman and another scientist, Fred Gage of the Salk Institute, which is part of the University of California in San Diego. Both were skeptical of Verfaillie's discovery, although Weissman did say it could be "very important" if other scientists—himself included—were given some of the cells to verify her claims. But Wade neglected to mention these scientists' rival interests. Whereas Gage and Weissman are co-founders of Stemcells Inc., which develops techniques for using adult stem cells, Verfaillie's patented "MAPC" stem cells could steal market share from Stemcells Inc.—and dilute the marketplace value of Weissman's professional expertise.

When I asked him, however, Wade said that there was no need to mention the rival business interests because they are routine among scientists, and because they pose less of a problem than that caused by the scientists' professional rivalries. Besides which, "my own feeling is that the reader is not interested," he said, and the column inches are better used to communicate other information. When I called Cornelia Dean, editor of science news at *The New York Times*, she responded that "we try to include in our articles all the information people need to make sense of what is going on." The *Times*' policy, she said, is to cite the commercial sponsors of newsworthy medical studies, and to ask quoted scientists about "financial ties." But she was very reluctant to discuss the problem any further, and seemed particularly surprised when I mentioned that *Times* op-ed contributor Jerome Groopman, a noted supporter of unfettered stem-cell and cloning research, is not just "a professor of medicine at Harvard" (as the *Times* op-ed cutlines describe him), but is also a board member of Advanced Tissue Sciences Inc., a biotech company in La Jolla, Calif. "The issue you are talking about is very important ... [and] you should not assume deficiencies are intentional," she said as she ended the conversation.

Which Doctor

Why are journalists so lax in describing these businesses and conflicts of interest? For one thing, the academic entrepreneurs do generate many life-saving or useful discoveries. Also, the traditional titles—scientist, professor, or dean—are technically correct, and editors in general are inclined to avoid extensive identification information about sources. And there's a good reason why: Stories would quickly become unreadable if bogged down by long descriptions of every scientist's business interests, like warning labels so long that consumers ignore them. Moreover, to say that a conflict of interest exists is not to say that scientists are being dishonest. Many scientists oppose cloning bans in part simply because it is a regulation on their profession, just as coal-mine executives oppose any new regulations on mining, no matter how minor. But many of these oft-quoted scientists do possess, and come from universities and research centers that do possess, a financial interest in one side or the other of the biotech debate. The problem is that the media's conception of scientists—as objective academics cocooned in the ivory tower—keeps reporters from informing readers of financial interests that may motivate scientists' advocacy.

It would be closer to the truth to describe scientists who have management or advisory duties in at least one company as what they are: "academic entrepreneurs," not scientists. Similarly, academic scientists who do not have direct financial stakes in companies, but who still receive income from companies that license their patents, should be described as such: "the recipient of patent royalties." If quoted scientists are linked to institutions, reporters should note whether those institutions are funded in whole or in part by firms with a stake in what's being written about. And when quoting university deans and executives, reporters need to check the university's "technology transfer" programs, whose task is to maximize revenue generation from the sale or licensing of the university's discoveries to industry. Gorner, at *The Chicago Tribune*, says one remedy would be a new type of beat that includes some aspect of his science beat, and some aspects of a traditional business beat, overseen by an editor who understands the role of money in biotech. "The rules are different in the two fields, and we need to synthesize them."

This proposal to better link university-based scientists with their financial interests puts the scientists on an equal plane with other entrepreneurs who stand to gain or lose from Washington's political debates. Voters already know that arms manufacturers will likely gain if Congress increases the defense budget, that oil executives will likely gain if Congress eases environmental laws, and that automakers will likely gain if federal safety standards are lowered. This understanding allows voters to judge better the credibility of industry claims whenever the industry is embroiled in a national debate. "We probably should [cite business interests] whenever it appears to be relevant," says *Washington Post* executive editor Len Downie. "And it appears that we are not doing enough." ●

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Collateral Victory

America's new imperial presence in Central Asia may be a preview of what's to come in Iraq. The picture is not wholly encouraging.

BY CHRISTIAN CARYL

TO BE HONEST, SHERALY AKBOTOEV does not look like a homicidal fanatic. I was not sure what to expect as I waited, on a sweltering summer's day, in a visitors' room of the special prison in the secret-police headquarters in Bishkek, the capital of the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan. Then the barred door swung open and they led him in, a man in his early 40s, clean-shaven, affable, and dressed in a white football jersey with light blue numbers. In appearance, he was about as far as you could get from the Taliban prisoners—bearded, emaciated, obsessively fumbling their prayer beads—whom I had interviewed in a Northern Alliance jail in Afghanistan last fall. And yet, until a few months before we met, Akbotoev, too, had been a warrior of God, a member of the Taliban's Islamist International.

On September 11, he was living in Kabul, one of more than one thousand militant Islamists from Central Asia who had come to Afghanistan to train in Osama bin Laden's terrorist camps and learn from the Taliban how to overthrow their own governments and set up an Islamic state. But unlike bin Laden, Akbotoev didn't see America as his enemy. Rather, his anger was directed at the corrupt, authoritarian former communists running his country.

Indeed, when he first heard about the attacks on New York and Washington from a news broadcast on the Russian-language service of the BBC, he claims that his first reaction was sympathy: "We thought it was a terrible tragedy. We're people too, after all." But a few weeks later, Akbotoev was ordered to Logar, a province just south of Kabul and a Taliban stronghold. There, at the local mosque, he was ushered into a funeral service for the IMU's charismatic military leader, a man who went by the *nom de guerre* Juma Namangani. Namangani and his soldiers had been holding the line in the northern city of Kunduz against the U.S.-supported troops of the Northern Alliance. But when they tried to fall back to the city of Mazar-I-Sharif, the IMU convoy was attacked by U.S. planes firing missiles. The better part of the IMU's thousand or so active fighters were slaughtered; the jeep carrying Namangani and his bodyguards was shredded. What was left of their bodies arrived at the designated mosque for burial wrapped in blankets in the back of a minibus—"but there wasn't much," says Akbotoev, "just meat."

The grisly destruction of the IMU represented one of the greatest but least appreciated strategic triumphs in America's war on terrorism. U.S. forces not only removed—at least for the time being—the chief force for militant Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia, but also won, in return, U.S. military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Almost overnight, American military and political power achieved a presence in Central Asia. Now Washington is poised to put that presence to work unlocking the region's vast, largely untapped oil reserves, which could be used to bolster the independence of the new Central Asian states from

CHRISTIAN CARYL *is the Moscow bureau chief of* Newsweek.

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Photograph by Christian Caryl

Northern Alliance soldiers unload a freight container filled with documents, ammunition, and weapons left over from a unit of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

jealous neighbors. And if the United States can eventually get that oil to market, it could undercut OPEC's hammerlock on world oil prices.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the United States suddenly finds itself the guarantor of peace and stability in this brittle, deeply impoverished part of the Muslim world—a role it appears to have little interest in fulfilling. Instead of building bridges of friendship to the people of Central Asia, we are instead aligning ourselves with the brutal dictators who oppress them. As a result, America may well become the new great enemy of the remnants of militant groups like the IMU—men like Akbotoev—and their countless peasant sympathizers. If the U.S. presence in Central Asia were to bring peace and prosperity to the region, we might reap gratitude rather than hatred. Instead, the Bush administration has scorned nation-building—even in Afghanistan still the source of most of the region's instability—and invited a backslide into militant Islam. For anyone wondering how the Middle East might look after a U.S. invasion of Iraq, Central Asia provides an ominous and disturbing precedent. Having won the war, we are doing our best to lose the peace.

Birth of a Legend

To most Americans, Central Asia is a long way from anywhere, but for most of human history it has been an important place. Even before the 19th century, when the British and Russian empires competed for its control in the "Great Game" storied by Kipling, the region was an incubator for remarkably successful nomadic invaders like Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. For most of the 20th century, Central Asia—a vast area bounded by the Caspian Sea in the west and the Urals in the north, running south to Iran and east to China—was occupied by five Soviet republics. When the U.S.S.R. collapsed, all five abruptly became independent countries. For good measure, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan are squashed between four of the world's nuclear powers: Russia, China, Pakistan, and India.

But Central Asia in the early 21st century enjoys enormous reserves of oil and natural gas, most of it in the area around the Caspian Sea. That fact was not lost on the Clinton administration, which in the mid-1990s devised a plan for countering the influence of competing great powers while simultaneously boosting the energy security of the West. The United States and its allies would help the Central Asian republics—known in policyland as the "CARs" or, more laddishly, as "the Stans"—to build pipelines, bypassing Russia and Iran, that would bring the oil and gas from the Caspian region to world markets. Do it properly, some wonks mused, and the United States might even persuade new oil powers like Kazakhstan to see the benefits of scorning OPEC membership.

The Clinton plan faced some serious challenges, though. First, it depended on long-term thinking and detailed knowledge of a group of complex, obscure, far-away countries—in other words, it didn't exactly play to the strengths of U.S. foreign policy. Second, though oil-rich, Central Asia was a region rife with problems. The Stans were poor during the Soviet era, and their economies disintegrated even further after independence. They were deeply corrupt. Their authoritarian leaders were economic incompetents and intolerant of even the mildest expressions of dis-

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sent. (Four of the five leaders who ruled at the time independence was achieved remain in power a decade later.) The CARs were also riven by ethnic vendettas, layer upon layer of them—from the millennia-old divide between Turkic peoples (like today's Uzbeks) and the Farsi nations (like today's Tajiks), right down to the tribal violence between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz that took thousands of lives at the beginning of the 1990s.

To be sure, oil wealth could ameliorate at least some of these problems—but years, perhaps decades, would pass before it began to flow. In the meantime, as some locals saw it, there was a quicker fix at hand: religion. Most people in the region adhere to a relatively tolerant, Sufi-influenced tradition of Islam, and decades of enforced Soviet secularization had provided some inoculation against fundamentalism. Unfortunately, the leaders of the new countries, all men of the Soviet system, seemed incapable of distinguishing between the inevitable religious revivals that accompanied the collapse of communism and rising fundamentalist challenges to their own regimes. In Uzbekistan, for example, merely expressing an excessive interest in the Koran was enough to get you in trouble with the police—perhaps even land you in a labor camp. Ironically, by judging the slightest sign of political awakening among Muslims as an intolerable provocation, the Central Asian regimes created the perfect preconditions for a faith-driven insurgency.

Indeed, some people were nursing the dream of an Islamic state even earlier. Akbotoev was one of them. In Soviet times, he attended a covert religious college, and in the early 1990s, as the religious renaissance that had awakened a few years earlier began to peak, he did his best to agitate for the Islamist idea. For a while, when the Central Asian despots proved all too adept at quashing the nascent fundamentalist movements, it looked as though the dream had faded. But then, in the mid-1990s, Akbotoev and his fellow believers began to hear about a man named Juma Namangani.

Namangani never gave interviews, photographs of him were almost nonexistent, and his ideology was vague. He was a will-o'-the-wisp, more of a concept than a man. And yet, in a part of the world where rumor has often proven as important as fact, it was his legend that inspired men like Akbotoev. He and others heard the unlikely tale of a Red Army paratrooper turned holy warrior, who had found his way to the faith after fighting on the Soviet side in the war in Afghanistan, and had tried to introduce sharia law in his hometown in Uzbekistan at the beginning of the 1990s, only to run afoul of the ruthlessly secular Uzbek dictator Islam Karimov. How the defeated believers, fleeing a wave of government repression that left thousands in jail, had fled to neighboring Tajikistan, where they heroically (in the Islamist reading) fought on the Islamist side in that country's savage five-year civil war. And then, in a tragic twist, how the valiant Namangani was betrayed by his friends there, when the war ended with a cynical peace agreement that excluded Namangani and his fighters. Namangani retreated to his hideouts in the mountains of Tajikistan, taking his men and their weapons with him.

The Central Asian leaders had offered the United States a deal: "We'll give you bases for your campaign against Afghanistan—if you kill our bad guys."

The saviors, in this cautionary tale, were none other than the Taliban and their patron, Osama bin Laden. It was they who gave Namangani support and refuge after all else had failed, and their rationale for doing so was unassailable. Namangani was a seasoned military leader, clearly devout, and he had already put his life on the line for the cause. The Taliban and bin Laden viewed the Central Asian states as ripe targets for insurrection, and Namangani appeared to be just the man to lead it. But Namangani also offered the Taliban a prime business opportunity. The Afghan mullahs were making enormous amounts of money by exporting heroin through Tajikistan and onward, via the other Central Asian republics and Russia, to the truly lucrative markets in Western Europe. Namangani and his fighters controlled some of the prime routes through the mountains, and he was happy to ink a corresponding management deal with his new sponsors. The jihad could begin.

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Base Instinct

It was in the summer of 1999 that Namangani's guerillas appeared in Akbotoev's hometown, a village in a remote province of Kyrgyzstan. It was Namangani's first attempt to strike out from his mountain hideouts to the strategic heartland of Central Asia, the fertile, densely populated Ferghana Valley basin. After intense fighting with the hopelessly ill-equipped Kyrgyz army, Namangani's probing force withdrew; some observers say it was because the Kyrgyz simply paid Namangani off. In the summer of 2000, he tried again. The direct military effects of both attacks, which involved small numbers of fighters, were negligible, but in a region of brittle stability the resulting tremors were felt far and wide.

The Uzbeks, with the biggest population and the biggest army in the region, responded to Namangani's incursions by mining their borders and bombing their neighbors—just the thing to anger the Tajiks, in particular, who have never quite managed to stomach the loss of their ancient homelands to the Uzbeks when Stalin drew up the republics in the 1920s and 1930s. When the IMU kidnapped four hapless American mountain climbers during its campaign in the summer of 2000, the feat earned it the dubious distinction of membership in the State Department's official list of terror organizations. But no one in Washington seemed to care particularly about the potential collapse of regional security. Eventually the Clinton administration managed to come up with $3 million for "non-lethal aid" to the Kyrgyz army, which had taken the brunt of the attacks, and a few handouts for the other countries. Otherwise, life went on.

And what a life it was. In the 1990s, Central Asia was the sort of place that just couldn't have been farther removed from the warm embrace of a Pax Americana. My favorite destination was the city of Osh, in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley. The local security forces certainly had their hands full. When it wasn't the trade in Afghan heroin, coming up the mountain highway from the south, it was underground activity by Islamist radicals or the black-market hanky-panky of Uighur separatists—Turkic-speaking Muslims operating in concert with their ethnic brothers the Kyrgyz over the border in nearby China. Of course, none of it could possibly outdo Tajikistan, still deep in the aftermath of its horrific civil war. I remember arriving once in the capital of Dushanbe at a moment when the entire staff of the local hard-currency supermarket had been kidnapped by a member of the new coalition government, who quite openly expressed his indignation at the inadequate protection money he'd been receiving from the store's management. Kalashnikov-toting rowdies in SUVs were a frequent sight, assassinations an everyday occurrence. You might find yourself dining in one of the few decent restaurants next to a couple of hard-eyed Russians in ill-fitting civilian clothes—just another indication of the huge Russian military presence (at its peak amounting to around 25,000 troops) that made the country into a virtual protectorate of Moscow. The truly adventurous might easily make a trip up into the Karategin Valley, the stronghold of Islamist rebels during the civil war and a favorite haunt of Namangani's men once the war was over. As recently as the fall of 2000, a visitor to the town of Tavildara, in one of the valley's remotest corners, could watch heavily armed mujahedin loading up their donkeys for yet another trip into the high mountains, where they were presumably preparing for the next trip to Afghanistan, at Mullah Omar's invitation, or their next jaunt into some neighboring Central Asian state.

Then came September 11. When President Bush laid out his war aims in a speech to the nation shortly after the attacks on New York and Washington, few Americans paused to wonder why he took the trouble to single out an obscure Central Asian guerrilla group as one of the prime enemies in our new struggle. The reason for the IMU's new top billing was simple enough. The Central Asian leaders had offered a deal: "We'll give you bases if you kill our bad guys." If the United States wanted to conduct a military campaign against al Qaeda and its Taliban allies in Afghanistan, it urgently needed bases in Central Asia. By adding the IMU to the target list, the United States assured itself of the Central Asians' support. And by wiping out Namangani and most of his forces once the campaign started, the U.S. military eliminated the region's most immediate security threat and cemented its own presence there, while giving its freshly consecrated regional allies a new lease on life. These were all things to be happy about. They were also part of the problem.

Stans and Deliver

One of the juiciest prizes gained by the United States and its allies in their deal with the Central Asians is Ganci Air Base, located on the outskirts of Bishkek, the Kyrgyz capital. Ganci AB (named after a New York firefighter who died in the World Trade Center) offers a perfect—if unintended—lesson in the way that modern military power also serves as an

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avatar of globalization. Right now, there are 3,000 soldiers from eight nations (six NATO countries as well as Australia and South Korea) holding up a 24/7 work routine at the base, from refueling planes to flying combat sorties. The obligatory base tour takes you from the giant gymnasium to the air-conditioned eight-man tents to the Internet room—all flown in from halfway around the world. Everyone agrees that the best cappuccino comes from the café run by the French soldiers, but it's the Dutch and the Scandinavians who have the best recreation hall—known, with predictably pedestrian wit, as "Valhalla." By the end of August, the base had pumped some $34 million into the Kyrgyz economy. (Just to give a sense of scale, the national budget of Kyrgyzstan is $250 million.) The PX is filled with Butterfingers, PlayStations, and cans of Skoal.

Western civilization, in short, has arrived in Kyrgyzstan. Nowadays, when you travel to Osh, you won't be greeted by a surprise army checkpoint on the lookout for infiltrating IMU fighters. The conspiracy theories in the papers are no longer devoted to the next maneuverings of Namangani and his puppetmasters in Kabul. Now it's Washington that supplies the oracles, and it's Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. Tommy Franks, head of the U.S. Central Command, whose words get all the parsing. One of the biggest news stories in Tajikistan recently has been the return of the U.S. Embassy staff, who chose to spend most of the 1990s in the considerably safer capital of Kazakhstan, hundreds of miles to the north. Inspired by their spirit of adventure, I decided, a few weeks ago, to visit Namangani's old headquarters in remote Tavildara, a bone-crushing eight-hour drive from the capital, Dushanbe. Where his mujahedin had been swarming just two years earlier, there were now no fighters to be found.

Instead, local officials welcomed me with tales of the latest visits by their new friends from the CIA, and showed off their souvenir shot glasses from Langley to prove it. "They got in a helicopter and flew up into the mountains," the head of the local KGB told me. "They went to look at Namangani's old camps, and they were able to confirm that they were all empty." Certainly, some of the credit for this change goes to the Tajiks themselves, along with their well-wishers in the international community who worked out the peace deal that ended the civil war and persuaded indigenous Islamists to put down their arms. But the fact of the matter is that most of Namangani's fighters are now consorting with the virgins of paradise largely due to the painstaking work of the U.S. Air Force and its army of spotters on the ground in Afghanistan.

All Quiet on the Kyrgyz Front?

But how long will it stay this way? On the face of things, all is quiet on the Kyrgyz front. Take a closer look, though, and the problems loom. Stationing troops in a country that has proven vulnerable to a dedicated guerrilla enemy is never a long-term solution. And if you're not the Roman Empire, prepared to crucify your political opponents at the slightest sign of dissent, you'd better have a decent counter-insurgency program on hand—or, at the very least, some talented PR people. So far, the United States has not been able to come up with either, in Kyrgyzstan

Photograph by Christian Caryl

Gen. Tommy Franks gives an interview to journalists in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

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or elsewhere. In March, the Kyrgyz president, Askar Akayev, presided over the shooting of six unarmed protesters in an anti-government demonstration, triggering a wave of opposition that has nearly pushed him out of office. The Bush administration responded by inviting Akayev to Washington and presenting him with a juicy aid package to sweeten his White House handshake.

Most Kyrgyz, meanwhile, say that they've seen little economic payoff from the presence of the new base, and explain this with whispers about the president's family members, who are alleged to be the real beneficiaries. (His son-in-law happened to win the contract to supply the base with aviation fuel. Another presidential relative, members of the opposition say, controls the airport.) A Kyrgyz parliamentary deputy, who claims to have received plenty of mail protesting the new U.S. presence, is planning a big protest this fall.

The American presence in Central Asia provides an excellent short course in how not to win hearts and minds in a part of the world where you urgently need to make friends outside the walls of the presidential palace.

Local Islamist groups—the unarmed kind—have been railing against Ganci in their propaganda leaflets. Kyrgyzstan is ostensibly an ally in the war against terrorism—but these days soldiers from the base are allowed to go into town only once a week, and then in groups. "We're in a more complicated region of the world than most of us are used to spending our time in," was how the affable Air Force major who showed me around put it. "If this wasn't a complicated part of the world, we wouldn't have to be here for this operation."

In short, the American presence in Central Asia adds up to an excellent lesson in how not to win hearts and minds in a part of the world where you urgently need to make some friends outside the walls of the presidential palace. And Kyrgyzstan, arguably the most liberal of the five republics, is the *best*-case scenario.

In Tajikistan, a leading member of the democratic opposition has been accusing the U.S. Embassy of denying access to the State Department's annual report on human rights. The embassy response? Deafening silence—and some hugs for the dictatorial president, who, as rumor has it, has allowed U.S. special forces to operate from his territory. Islam Karimov, president of Uzbekistan—now home to another big U.S. base—recently got his own Rose Garden photo op, despite thousands of opponents languishing in jails and concentration camps, some on charges as serious as wearing long beards (allegedly an outward indicator of Islamist inclinations). Meanwhile, both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have been registering a startling uptick in the activities of a group called Hizb-ut-Tahrir, an unarmed but fanatically anti-Jewish Islamist group that has been expanding its activities to places hitherto untouched by fundamentalist propaganda. And they're finding receptive listeners.

Corruption and contempt for the most basic norms of the law, remain as entrenched as ever. Economies in most of the region continue to deteriorate, complicated by a high birthrate which is generating huge numbers of unemployable young men—the recruiting ground of terrorists to come. Even the heroin trade is alive and well, thanks to the incapacity of the new Afghanistan government to cope with its poppy growers. These were all problems before the Americans arrived. The big difference now is that the United States is implicated in them, thanks to its ostentatious support for the area's dubious regimes.

But this wouldn't be impossible to change. First, we could expand aid efforts that benefit populations rather than corrupt rulers, beginning with such fundamentals as schools for the region's children—boys and girls alike. This is easier said than done, but we have little other choice. Second, we must forcefully push the republics' leaders to coordinate their policies with each other and cooperate across borders, especially in the all-important Ferghana Valley. To that end, we should, wherever necessary, aggressively seek pragmatic alliances with international organizations, ranging from the OSCE to the Aga Khan Foundation, that have already done pathbreaking work on this front—however multilateralist such a strategy might sound. Third, in keeping with that approach, we should think up a strategy for solving

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the region's problems that can break through our own government's bureaucratic firewalls as well as the borders between individual countries. It's a strategy, by the way, that should include training programs for the local militaries—as well as measures to get local armies cooperating rather than threatening each other. Finally, we should step up our efforts to get the oil flowing, not to mention devise ways to ensure that oil wealth actually reaches the people of the supplying countries as well as their rulers. A big step has already been taken in that direction with the start of work on the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline in September.

The Caucasus and Central Asia

Map by USAID

Even if we do all these things, though, there's one other piece of business that has to be taken care of before we can feel sure about the fate of Central Asia, and that's to win the peace in Afghanistan. When Gen. Franks came to Tajikistan on his recent visit to the region, President Emomali Rakhmonov had one big request to make. He wanted the United States and its allies to deploy the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan to places beyond the city limits of Kabul—the key, as most experts would acknowledge, to any serious effort to build a new Afghan state. Like his colleagues in office, Rakhmonov may be a dictator, but he's no idiot. He knows that all of his own work to keep his job will be in vain unless the anti-terrorist coalition can live up to its state-building obligations in the country that so recently provided a haven for a full assortment of international troublemakers. If we can't even manage to build the highway from Kabul to Kandahar, we will hardly be in a position to ensure stability in Central Asia.

The reason is obvious: You can't fight ideas with guns, and the Islamist ideal lingers on. Namangani may be dead, his forces scattered, but his myth continues to haunt. He was mysterious enough in life. Now, in death, he threatens to become what the Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid, one of the leading experts on the region, has astutely described as "the Che Guevara of Central Asia." Meanwhile, in recent months, there have been signs that IMU remnants hiding out in Pakistan are trying to regroup under the banner of a new organization, apparently to be called "the Islamic Movement of Central Asia."

Unless the United States can build on its military victory, there can be no guaranteeing that Namangani's ghost will not rise again. And while it's a sign of hope that Washington has announced fresh initiatives to invigorate the stalled state-building effort in Afghanistan—by reemphasizing economic assistance and perhaps prodding our allies to expand peacekeeping beyond Kabul—the Bush administration's efforts in Central Asia remain less than encouraging. Over the last few months, after all, this same administration has unveiled a bold new foreign policy paradigm to undergird their plans for war against Iraq. Instead of the feckless multilateralism of the Clinton years or the amoral realpolitik of the Cold War, they argue, the United States will seek to impose an imperial peace on the Middle East—to replace the thuggish authoritarian regimes that breed fundamentalism and terrorism with vibrant democracies. But in Central Asia, the Bush administration has allied America with the thugs—men not so different from a second-rate Iraqi despot the United States embraced, also for the sake of stability, some two decades ago. If our performance in Central Asia is a preview of our coming Middle East adventure, Iraq may only be the beginning of our problems.

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War Torn

Why Democrats can't think straight about national security.

BY HEATHER HURLBURT

LATE IN 2000, WITH ONE EYE ON THE presidential campaign and the other on history, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger called a group of staffers into his office. He wanted to give a major speech laying out the essence of the Clinton administration's national security doctrine and the challenge of transformation that lay ahead. We had a good story to tell, he said. Though the administration had not garnered high marks for security savvy in its early years, we had, as they say, grown in office. In the last five years, we had fought—and won—two wars under trying circumstances, deploying cutting-edge weaponry in Bosnia and Kosovo. We had not merely held NATO together but boosted its size and sense of purpose. We had stitched together a new web of agreements and alliances to constrain potential enemies and control weapons of mass destruction. We had seen the future of war: smaller-scale, higher-tech, faster and more diffuse. Now Berger wanted to formalize our thinking about the next challenge: modernizing the military, and American thinking about the military, to meet the new threats.

It would have been a great speech, and this former speechwriter has a file of drafts six inches thick to prove it. But Berger never gave it. White House staff convened meetings, prepared papers, and debated drafts with Berger, from whom we had full interest and engagement (the kind that drives speechwriters to hide under the desk). What we lacked was the kind of intense policy debate that usually characterizes White House life. No fevered arguments among staffers and Cabinet officials, just prolonged discussions agonizing over how best to present our record. Through the next month, while the Berger draft gathered dust on my desk, I wrote speeches on welfare, trade with China, women in American history, and why Middle East politics are like golf. Meanwhile, the security speech-that-never-was became an office joke. As quickly as Berger would slot it into his schedule, something else would knock it out. None of the White House political staff took any interest in it. Eyes didn't just glaze over; they rolled when I mentioned it. Why did I want to work on something so dull, when I could be writing about the budget battle?

In recent months, I've been thinking a lot about that speech and the indifference to military matters that killed it. As the debate over Iraq unfolded, I was dismayed, like most Democrats, to watch the Bush administration hawks nearly destroy the trust of our allies, whom we desperately need in our fight against al Qaeda, by pushing militarily insane plans to overthrow Saddam's regime unilaterally. Nor could I shake the suspicion that the White House timed the drumbeat to influence the November elections. But I was equally dismayed at the feckless, equivocal way in which the Democrats handled the debate. For months, they contented themselves with asking "tough questions" about the invasion plans—clearly hoping the whole issue would go away so that they could get back to talking about the economy. But it didn't go away. In the end, Bush won plaudits for shifting (apparently) to an approach that emphasized the need for U.N. approval and the involvement of our allies—one more in line with Democratic thinking. But Democrats didn't lead Bush to

HEATHER HURLBURT, *a former speechwriter for President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, is a Michigan-based consultant and writer.*

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that position. They were instead dragged to it, and looked weak and craven as a result.

Since then, there's been plenty of hand-wringing among the leadership and rank-and-file Democrats about how politically inept the party appeared in the face of Bush's saber rattling. But that's the problem. Democrats are in this position precisely *because* we respond to matters of war politically, tactically. We worry about how to position ourselves so as not to look weak, rather than thinking through realistic, sensible Democratic principles on how and when to employ military force, and arguing particular cases, such as Iraq, from those principles. There are a lot of reasons for this failure, including the long-time split within the party between hawks and doves. But we will never resolve that split, nor regain credibility with voters on national security, until we learn to think straight about war. And we will never learn to think straight about war until this generation of professional Democrats overcomes its ignorance of and indifference to military affairs.

Reactionary Jerks

The reasons for this apathy aren't hard to discern. Many Democrats who came of age during the Vietnam War retain a gut-level distrust of the military. Younger staffers, who may not carry the same psychological baggage, have few mentors urging them toward military or security issues. I speak from experience: My main qualification for my first Washington job—covering European security for Congress—was that I could locate the Warsaw Pact countries on a map and correctly identify the acronyms of the relevant international organizations.

But lack of expertise is only a symptom. The malady is an irresponsible lack of interest. The issues that drive most contemporary Democrats into politics are reproductive rights, health care, fiscal policy, or poverty, not national security. Even those young Democrats who are interested in foreign affairs tend to be drawn to "soft" subjects such as debt relief and human rights. Aspiring foreign policy wonks will often get pulled into military affairs by way of, say, their work on demining. But when these young people visualize exciting jobs in the next Democratic administration, they think State Department, not Pentagon.

This lack of interest feeds a vicious cycle of stereotyping. A friend of mine, a foreign policy aide to a Democratic senator, tells this story: A young Democratic Hill staffer calls an officer at the Pentagon with an innocuous question about a potential base closing, but telegraphs his total ignorance of the subject. The officer, already suspicious of Hill staffers, reads the ignorance as disrespect and answers with barely concealed impatience. The staffer takes this as confirmation that the military is full of reactionary jerks.

Such mutual distrust is part of the larger post-Vietnam political dynamic. Just as GOP operatives have little incentive to focus on race and inner-city issues because such activism seldom wins the party votes, Democrats feel little pressure from core supporters to think seriously about military issues. This doesn't mean that most Democrats are anti-military, any more than most Republicans are racist. But it does mean that Democrats have little institutional credibility on security issues—same with Republicans on race. Recognizing its vulnerability, each side gets truculent rather than sensibly responsive when confronted by the issues.

But there's a difference. In a jittery post-9/11 world, national security will overshadow every other issue in the public consciousness—racial equality, healthcare, or a dozen others that Democrats consider their strength. A party that comes across as unserious about national security is permanently vulnerable, no matter how compelling its vision of domestic policy.

This partly explains why President Bush recently accused Democrats of not caring about the country's security—and why Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle reacted so furiously. The accusation was a bit rich, coming from an administration run largely by men who had ducked service in Vietnam. When it comes to military service, Democratic lawmakers have nothing to be embarrassed about; of the Senate's 38 veterans, 17 are Democrats (including Daschle). Still, one indication that Democratic lawmakers spend relatively less time focused on military affairs is the people they hire: Two-thirds of veterans on the Senate Armed Services Committee staff are Republicans.

Of course, numerous seasoned Democrats have experience grappling with national security issues. Some are staffers on key Hill committees, others former appointees at the Clinton Pentagon and National Security Council who now work at think tanks, law firms, and universities. But they tend to be hived off from the larger community of professional Democrats. The two subcultures regard each other with some suspicion—as I learned when I moved from one to the other. The larger Democratic community views the foreign and defense policy types as naive, verbose elitists ignorant of the realities of American politics. In turn, the experts readily view professional Democrats as unprincipled hacks or uninformed rubes.

By the same token, not every Republican staffer or politician is a defense strategy buff. Many GOP policies are outdated, poorly thought out, or just plain wrong. But Republicans know that national security is inherently

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favorable political terrain for them. Thus, even in the absence of interest or expertise, they'll learn enough about a given issue to score political points and put Democrats on the defensive. Given this reality, Democrats can't afford to be simply *as* knowledgeable and serious about national security issues as their Republican counterparts. They have to be more so: willing not only to be as tough, but more shrewd.

It's Security, Stupid

The problem of being the more liberal party and also being credible on national security is neither new nor easy to solve. What made the Cold War liberalism of the FDR-Truman-Kennedy years such a potent and enduring force, after all, was its internal tensions: the mix of support for international law, formal alliances, and hard-nosed realism. Even today, public polling suggests that Americans do favor Democratic multilateralism. But they also want to see leaders who look comfortable with maintaining and, more importantly, using America's military might.

After Vietnam, the old Cold War liberalism no longer seemed credible to the party's core and to many of its leaders. Many Democratic officeholders and operatives responded by focusing on those foreign policy issues that they and their base were comfortable with, such as human rights and arms control, while others shied away from international policy altogether and focused on domestic issues. At the same time, most Democrats understood that a reputation for being "soft" on defense issues was a serious political liability. But instead of grappling with the substance of war and national security, Democrats began to approach their vulnerability as a problem of tactics and political positioning.

Congressional Democrats did produce centers of national security thinking, from Cold War liberals like Scoop Jackson to conservative southern Democrats trying to reassert their standing within the national party to the inoculating presence of liberals Carl Levin and Ted Kennedy on the Senate Armed Services Committee. Most importantly, by the mid-1980s leading Democrats like Gary Hart and Sam Nunn were introducing some of the most innovative ideas on military reform of anyone in Congress. The end of the Cold War, then, should have helped heal the hawk/dove divide and given Democrats a fresh start on security. But events got in the way. The Cold War liberals were dying off. The southerners were losing elections. Influential military theorists like Hart and Nunn, whose words commanded respect on both sides of the aisle, left the Senate. And most importantly, the 1990 Gulf War debate re-opened old wounds—and taught the party some misguided lessons.

Though the debate over the 1990 Iraq resolution was more vigorous than the one this fall, Democrats were not any better prepared to wage it. At the time, I was a young staffer detached from my Europe duties to write a Democratic senator's Gulf War floor statement. I considered pointing out that I knew little about the Gulf and less about modern warfare, but changed my mind—there didn't seem to be anyone around our office who knew any more than I did. When I worked up the courage to ask which position we were taking, the response came back: "Start writing, and we'll tell you later when we decide."

Before crafting a Democratic senator's floor speech on the war resolution, I asked which position we'd be taking. The response came back: "Start writing, and we'll tell you later when we decide."

Democrats drew two lessons from that debate, the paralyzing consequences of which became all too apparent this fall: first, that how you vote is more important than whether you have any coherent ideas about the problem; and second, that the party can brush past its failure on national security matters by stressing innovative domestic policies. After all, the president who won the Gulf War lost reelection to a candidate whose message was "It's the economy, stupid."

Indeed, Bill Clinton came to the White House in part by explicitly rejecting his predecessor's focus on international affairs. But that was only possible thanks to the economic downturn of the early 1990s and the recent peaceful end of the Cold War. Soon enough, the new administration's relative unpreparedness on foreign affairs started to show. The administration began to stumble, notably on gays in the military and Somalia. To be sure, some of these troubles were the unavoidable result of managing foreign affairs in the post-Cold War chaos—when the closest anyone came to articulating a coherent theory of force was Lawrence Eagleburger's infamous

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dictum on Bosnia, "We don't have a dog in that fight." But others were the product of a White House whose attention to international affairs was sporadic, inexpert, and reactive.

The tide began to turn in 1995 when, after years of equivocation, the Clinton administration decided to put some muscle behind its mouth in the Balkans. The mix of NATO air strikes, tough negotiating tactics and cold-blooded acquiescence to the Croatian reconquest of the Krajina wasn't pretty. When the Kosovo campaign unfolded a few years later, it too was messy. But U.S. intervention turned the tide against Balkan adventurism and, just as important, united NATO behind a mission that married the maintenance of international law and human rights to hardheaded geopolitics. Meanwhile, congressional Republicans slid into an increasingly mindless isolationism. And public ratings of Democratic competence in handling the nation's foreign affairs got as close to Republican levels as they have ever been.

Yet little of this momentum survived the end of the Clinton administration, for two distinct but interrelated reasons. First, the logic behind Clinton's resort to force never gelled into a doctrine that could be succinctly expressed, broadly supported, and used to guide future conflicts. There was always too much going on in the "now;" and we were not always able to be honest with ourselves about what fell within such a doctrine and what goals, however noble, politics and resources dictated we leave out.

In hindsight, the underlying logic looks clearer: call it "advanced democracy internationalism." The United States would work when possible through the United Nations but in reality with alliances such as NATO to police minimum standards of international conduct. It would use force if necessary, but only in tandem with diplomacy, and largely, even exclusively, against threats to advanced democracies and the systems of laws and alliances that undergird them (with the hope of extending those laws and alliances to encompass and protect more and more countries). Thus, while the 1990s saw many bloody conflicts around the globe, from Africa to the Caucasus, the United States went to war only in the Balkans, because that conflict threatened the integrity of our most important security alliance, NATO.

But such a doctrine was never articulated. And that stems from the second reason for the loss of momentum after 2000. Without the White House, the Democrats had no institutional or organized way to think through national security issues. The Georgetown salons—like those Madeleine Albright held to nurture Democratic foreign policy in the dark days of the 1980s—had dissolved. And although plenty of Democrats populate foreign policy think tanks like the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Brookings Institution, such above-the-fray outfits are no match for aggressively conservative institutions like the Heritage Foundation and

Who's Who

Speculation that Sen. **John McCain** (R-Ariz.) might run for president as a Democrat has diminished since the publication of his latest book, *Worth the Fighting For*, in which he writes, "I did not get to be president of the United States. And I doubt I shall have reason or opportunity to try again." But moves are afoot in the McCain camp. **Marshall Wittmann**, a top adviser to McCain's 2000 campaign, recently left the GOP, following a similar move by fellow McCain adviser **John Weaver** earlier this year; last month, Wittmann signed on as McCain's new communications director. Is McCain running after all? At his recent book party, his wife, **Cindy McCain**, confided to a reporter that the couple's children support a switch.

House insiders say Democratic Majority Leader **Richard Gephardt** (D-Mo.) is almost certain to retire after the midterm elections, clearing the way for a major shake-up among the upper ranks of the party's leadership. Democratic Whip **Nancy Pelosi** (D-Calif.), widely considered to be Gephardt's heir after defeating Rep. **Steny Hoyer** (D-Md.) for the post last year, will likely run for minority leader—but she'll have to contend with Rep. **Martin Frost** (D-Texas), who spearheaded the party's successful redistricting efforts in 2000 and is also interested in the top slot. The contest between Reps. **Rosa DeLauro** (D-Conn.) and **Robert Menendez** (D-N.J.) for Frost's current job of caucus chairman is likely to be more controversial. DeLauro is now assistant to the minority leader, a post created for her in 1998 when she lost her first bid for the caucus chairmanship and raised a stink about diversity in the leadership. Now, Menendez is making a similar argument against DeLauro, telling fellow

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the American Enterprise Institute. The latter two are known today as the places where the current Bush hawks, formerly members of the Reagan and Bush I administrations, sharpened their critical knives during the 1990s. Unlike their mainstream equivalents, the national security programs at Heritage and AEI exist not so much to contribute ideas to the public square as to influence very specific policies and legislation on defense. Democrats have no equivalent. As Evelyn Farkas, a Democratic staffer for the Senate Armed Services Committee, puts it, "Part of the reason we don't have a clear message on defense is that we don't have a place where people argue and create one for us."

Nor do Democrats have subsidized journals of opinion like *The Weekly Standard* or *The National Interest* devoted to hashing out serious partisan ideas about defense and foreign policy. Other than Thomas Friedman (and perhaps Fareed Zakaria), there are no prominent left-of-center policy intellectuals in the mold of William Kristol and Robert Kagan. Here, too, the root of the problem is in the general indifference to military affairs among Democrats and their donors. When Michele Flournoy, a former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Threat Reduction now at CSIS, tried to obtain funding for defense research, she found that foundations comfortable giving to Democrats generally are less comfortable supporting specifically military projects, while foundations which like to fund hardcore defense work tend to fund Republicans. "As a pro-defense Democrat, I'm seen as a bit of an odd duck," she says. "Foundations tend to see me as coming from 'the other side.'" Former State Department staffer Tim Bergreen has spent much of the past year working to set up a think tank with a Democratic angle on military policy, without much success. At one point, the chief of staff to a top House Democrat told him "those aren't the issues that interest my boss." Hill staffer Lorelei Kelly reports that, when funding for the peacekeeping program at the Army War College came under attack, it was easier to get support from a Quaker pacifist group than from Democratic House members.

Bush Hawk Down

Such infrastructure, along with a sensible doctrine of force with which non-specialists could come to terms, would have gone a long way toward helping Democrats think through their responses to the post-9/11 world. Among other things, they might have noticed sooner the big mistake the Bush administration was making by not bringing NATO into the latter stages of the Afghan campaign—a mistake that even many Bush officials now recognize. Most importantly, the Democrats might have steered themselves toward a sounder alternative to the Bush hawks' policies on Iraq. For months, these hawks had sought a military overthrow of the Iraqi regime through some mix of American military and domestic

Democrats that it's time the party had a Hispanic among the three top posts. DeLauro thinks she has the votes to beat him, including the support of half the House's ranking committee members, a majority of the **Congressional Black Caucus**, and Pelosi herself. But Menendez now may be pulling ahead. "How many congressional districts are there with 8-15 percent Latino vote?" asks one Hill insider. "That's a lot of leverage. It's just arithmetic."

October's Federal Election Commission filings provide a telling snapshot of who's leading the race to become the Democratic nominee in 2004—who's raising the most money and doling it out to fellow Democrats in tight races this fall. **Al Gore**'s Leadership '02 raised about $1.2 million but distributed only about $50,000 of it—all, interestingly, to nonincumbent Democrats campaigning for Senate seats. Likewise, Sen. **John Edwards**'s (D-N.C.) New American Optimists has raised a strong $2.2 million but donated just $84,000, most to his fellow Senate Democrats. Worst was Sen. **John Kerry** (D-Mass.), whose Citizen Soldier Fund has raised nearly $4.5 million, but distributed a mere $55,000 to House and Senate Democrats. Senate Majority Leader **Tom Daschle**'s (D-S.D.) DASHPAC, on the other hand, has raised nearly $3 million and has distributed about $91,000 to House candidates and $221,000 to Senate Democrats, with large checks going to the most vulnerable: **Max Baucus** (D-Mont.), **Max Cleland** (D-Ga.), **Tim Johnson** (D-S.D.), **Mary Landrieu** (D-La.), and **Paul Wellstone** (D-Minn.). Gephardt's Effective Government Committee has raised about $1 million and has spread about $220,000 among more than 50 of his fellow House colleagues. Sen. **Joe Lieberman**'s (D-Conn.) Responsibility, Opportunity, Community PAC has lived up to its name, raising $2.5 million and distributing it widely among House Democrats and vulnerable Senate Democrats. But the hands-down winner was Sen. **Hillary Clinton** (D-N.Y.), whose HILLPAC raised $2.4 million and spread nearly half a million of it to House and Senate Democrats.

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insurrectionary forces, openly ignoring the United Nations and spurning NATO involvement. As the accepted phrase has it, they wanted to go it alone.

In late August and early September, the administration began grudgingly to admit—to itself, if not to the public—that its preferred strategy was unsound. It wasn't the Democrats who forced the hawks to rethink, however, but a combination of pressure from within by multilateralists like Colin Powell and pressure from outside by establishment Republican critics like Brent Scowcroft. Slowly it dawned on the White House that the United States couldn't hope to invade Iraq alone. As Bush reframed the debate around a demand for absolute Iraqi compliance with all U.N. Security Council resolutions, backed by the threat of devastating force, public and elite opinion slowly shifted in the president's direction.

When funding for the peacekeeping program at the Army War College came under attack, it was easier to get support from a Quaker pacifist group than from Democratic House members.

Democrats could and should have called loudly for such a U.N.-based policy months earlier. Instead, most hid behind "tough questions" without offering a credible alternative. Other Democrats, particularly those with presidential ambitions, adopted a different party line—the Republicans'.

The irony is that a policy of using the threat of U.S. military power to enforce U.N. mandates in Iraq is one that both the hawks and at least some of the doves in the Democratic Party could have agreed on. Had they taken that position last spring—or even during the summer—Democrats might have helped shift the debate in a more sensible direction earlier, and served the country by limiting the negative international fallout from the hawks' unilateralism. They also might have helped themselves politically: When the president shifted his positions in September, it would have been seen, rightly, as a victory for the Democrats. Instead, by the time Bush swung towards a multilateral/U.N. approach to Iraq, most Democrats found the new position difficult to disagree with, but almost impossible to take credit for—John Kerry's valiant efforts on the Senate floor notwithstanding.

Post-Cold Warriors

Now that the Iraq vote is past, Democrats will be tempted, as Tom Daschle has said, to "move on." But that would be a big mistake if it means continuing to treat defense issues like tests they can squeak through with Cliff's Notes. With so many real security threats out there, and so many half-baked conservative plans being hatched to counter them, the country needs Democrats back in the security game in a serious way.

Take China. Conservative hawks, noting China's rapid drive to modernize its military, insist that the Beijing leadership is aiming to reassert control over Taiwan, which it considers a renegade province, and then to end U.S. dominance in East Asia. Democrats and most China specialists, however, note that, whatever their intentions, the Chinese simply won't have the capability to challenge the United States for at least 15 to 20 years. But that doesn't mean Democrats shouldn't promote policies consistent with Democratic values that would give China extra reason to pause before acting aggressively—for instance, by urging Japan to commit forces outside Japanese waters for collective defense (see "Axis of Good," by Joshua Kurlantzick, July/August).

Or take the issue that got me started, transforming the military to meet 21st-century challenges. Donald Rumsfeld, the current secretary of defense, has begun an effort to think this through—guided, of course, by his very hawkish views. But Rumsfeld's exercise is only the first sally in what is going to be a very difficult debate. Money for technology or money for troops? Update weaponry gradually, or skip a generation and modernize in one fell swoop? Democrats outside the field are as unprepared for these debates as they were on Iraq.

Getting Democrats to take defense issues seriously will not be easy; it means changing the party's basic mode of thinking. But it can be done. After all, it took less than a decade for Democrats to go from being the party of deficits to being the party more trusted for fiscal responsibility. This transformation happened because enough Democrats got tired of losing elections and did the hard work of crafting innovative and effective ideas in areas like crime and economic stewardship that the party had previously ceded to Republicans. National defense is perhaps the last big area where Democrats have not really done this. And in a time of war, it's the one area where they can't afford not to.

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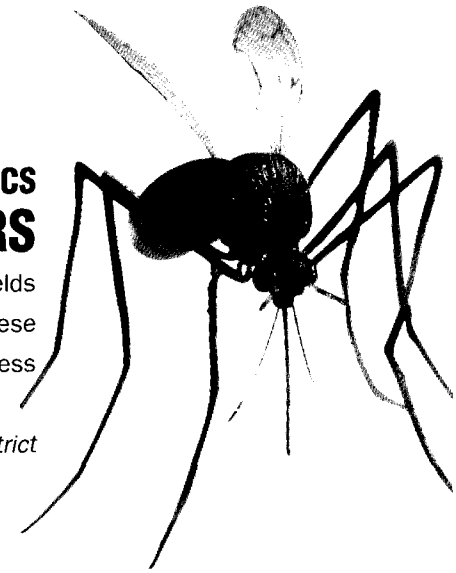
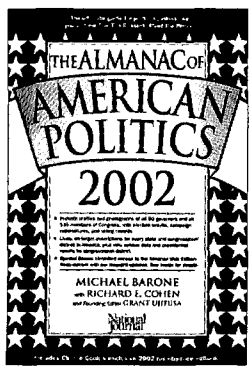
—*The Almanac of American Politics on New Jersey's 2nd Congressional District*





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Cruise Control

Bathhouses are reigniting the AIDS crisis. It's time to shut them down.

BY TOM FARLEY

JUDGING FROM THE DESCRIPTIONS I'VE read and heard, the bathhouse I visited not long ago is fairly typical. Pay $8 to the clerk behind the Plexiglas window and he'll give you a towel and buzz you in. Inside are hallways of private rooms for sex, each about six by six feet, or just big enough for a thin mattress and a little maneuvering beside it. The rest of the bathhouse is mostly comprised of different areas for men to "cruise"—to check out the other bodies and decide which one to bring back to a room. These include a gym (complete with free weights, Nautilus equipment, and aerobic trainers), a sauna, Jacuzzi, and group showers. Elsewhere, gay porn videos play to help men get aroused. For those who like to watch, be watched, or have group sex, there are also orgy areas, including a fantasy "jail," a picnic table for men to lean over when receiving anal sex, and "slings" into which men can strap themselves to expose their anus for anyone who happens by.

Bathhouses are wholly designed to facilitate anonymous sex—sex as a purely physical act, without context, past, or future. But the most anonymous areas of all are the "maze" and the "glory hole" booths. The maze is completely black, a tangle of paths and dead ends defined by vertical sheets of darkly painted plywood where men grope until they find one or more receptive bodies. The booths are paired and separated by plywood through which fist-sized holes have been cut at hip level. Men manage to have not just oral but also anal sex through these holes, guaranteeing that each hasn't the slightest idea with whom he is copulating. With the act of sex stripped to its essential physical steps, it is easy—and quite common—for patrons to have sexual contact with several men in a single visit.

Even beyond their physical designs, baths influence their patrons' behavior by maintaining certain clear-cut rules. "Most bathhouse cruising is non-verbal," advises a bathhouse Web site, which also makes it clear that "most of the time you don't learn each other's names." "Conversations in the orgy rooms should be kept to a minimum," advises another site. Also, "It is considered embarrassing to make it with someone you already know," and "It is uncommon to use condoms during oral sex." One bathhouse Web site even has its own Miss Manners, a column called "Ask Towel Boy" in which a veteran gives practical answers to such questions as "Is it a social misdeed to walk around nude all the time?" and "How do I refuse someone's advances without offending them?"

Although they are small in number, bathhouses have an impressive reach. One survey found only about 80 bathhouses and sex clubs in the entire United States. But a recent study of gay men in major cities revealed that nearly one-third had visited such a place in the previous year. Furthermore, surveys of men who frequent baths confirm what their surroundings encourage: On average, bathhouse patrons have had sex with more than 30 different men in the previous six months. Baths can serve thousands of men per week, and major gay gatherings such as New Orleans' "Decadence" and Mardi Gras attract men from all over the country. Not surprisingly, this makes them critical hotspots for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

Bathhouses like the one I visited became infamous for their role in spreading the AIDS virus in the 1980s. The disease raced through gay men in magnet cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York because it was so easily spread through the dense sexual networks centered in the baths. Many bathhouses were shut down at the time in an effort to contain the epidemic. But while the

TOM FARLEY *is a professor at the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.*

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number of bathhouses is lower now than in the 1980s, most major U.S. cities still have at least one, and the behavior of customers has grown steadily riskier in recent years, to the point where there is now an explosion of syphilis among bathhouse clientele. When I was medical director for the HIV and STD program at the Louisiana Office of Public Health, part of my job was to keep an eye open for such outbreaks, since syphilis—which causes open sores on the genitalia and makes it easier to transmit disease—often presages an outbreak of HIV. If public health officials don't respond effectively, the current syphilis outbreak could cause HIV to again spread through communities like wildfire. Today, more than two decades after the start of the AIDS epidemic and 15 years after public health officials and bathhouse owners first clashed over the problem, it is once again time to take a hard look at the evidence and either radically change the way they do business or shut them down altogether.

If public health officials don't respond effectively, the current syphilis outbreak could cause HIV to again spread through communities like wildfire.

Sex in the City

The last time public health officials worried about syphilis outbreaks among gay men was in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when bathhouses were in their prime. Syphilis rates hit a decade-long peak during the unfolding tragedy of the then-mysterious AIDS epidemic in 1983. At the time, a French-Canadian flight attendant named Gaetan Dugas was a loyal bathhouse customer. According to Randy Shilts, the reporter who wrote the history of the early AIDS epidemic, *And the Band Played On*, Dugas was blond, handsome, and ravenous for partners. His job took him to cities throughout North America, where, by his own claim, he had sex with 250 men a year for at least three years. Later, when he became one of the first men diagnosed with the "gay cancer" of Kaposi's sarcoma, William Darrow, a disease control specialist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, managed to link Dugas to 40 of the first 248 AIDS cases diagnosed in this country in 10 different cities. Although Dugas is infamous for his role in spreading HIV, AIDS researchers believe that if he hadn't, many others could have taken his place. This is because of the way gay men were having sex at the time. Bathhouses, which had been small, seedy, and advertised only by word of mouth in the 1950s and early 1960s, flourished to become a central part of urban gay life in the 1970s. Statistics are hard to come by, but one report claims that more than 50 percent of gay men in major cities visited the baths; 20 percent described their visits as "somewhat" or "very" frequent.

Between 1979 and 1984, with syphilis peaking and bathhouses serving thousands of men a week, HIV tore through the gay population in magnet cities like San Francisco and New York. Reconstructions of the epidemic estimate that close to half of gay men in these cities—and between 270,000 and 490,000 nationwide—became infected in just these few years. As gay men, public health officials, and finally the nation began to comprehend the true horror of the AIDS epidemic, a few began to call for the bathhouses to be shut down. San Francisco mayor Dianne Feinstein first raised the issue with health director Mervyn Silverman in 1982, but, under pressure from gay groups, Silverman initially balked. By late 1984, with the number of AIDS cases in San Francisco reaching about 750, reports by private detectives outlining the continuing high-risk sex in bathhouses, and a survey showing that 10 percent of gay men in San Francisco were still visiting the baths, Silverman ordered them shut down. The following year, the number of gay men newly infected with HIV declined dramatically. The public closure of San Francisco's baths is what many people remember of those days, but the story doesn't end there. The bathhouses sued the city, and a California Superior Court judge allowed them to reopen, provided they took the doors off the private rooms and booths, so men could be monitored, and hired staff to roam through the baths, kicking out any men engaged in "unsafe sexual practices."

The bathhouse closures in San Francisco put political pressure on other AIDS hotspots to do the same. By late 1985, New York allowed local officials to close establishments in which sex was taking place. New York City mayor Ed Koch declared the rules to be "inadequate" and unenforceable, but nonetheless pushed for a court order and closed several bathhouses. The Los Angeles Board of Supervisors passed regulations in 1986 requiring bathhouse owners to police their establishments and eject anyone engaging in high-risk sex. As stories of bathhouse behavior spread, similar rules were passed in other cities.

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As the public saw the government respond to the AIDS epidemic and shut down baths and as the HIV epidemic seemed to slow among gay men, however, this vigilance diminished. Battles continued out of the public eye, and many baths managed to stay open or have since reopened, with little oversight from health departments. In San Francisco, the baths were replaced by "sex clubs"—essentially bathhouses without enclosed rooms, in keeping with the judge's order. In New York, four bathhouses never closed. The city began regular inspections, but decided to limit its oversight to sex taking place in plain sight. "We've demonstrated our concern," State Health Commissioner David Axelrod told *The New York Times* in 1987, adding that he did not "believe it is the responsibility of the government to enter into someone's home. And we view the doors of the private rooms the same way." Likewise, in other cities, the private rooms remained and government officials gave up trying to close them. When government oversight relaxed, not only did the baths remain, but barely a year after the highly publicized closings, their popularity rose once again. By 1987, business had "gone up 20 to 25 percent," said the owner of a New York City bathhouse.

Violating the "Code"

Over the past 15 years, bathhouses have continued to operate mostly out of view of the general public, even though they are widely known to gay men. During the mid-1980s, as gay men watched their friends go from healthy to dead in weeks, the "condom code" took over, and even in the baths condom use became the expected norm. Since then, though, with HIV-fighting drug cocktails keeping HIV-infected men not just alive, but also looking and feeling healthy, the AIDS epidemic has lost the profound emotional impact it once had, and the number of sexually active infected men has skyrocketed. Throughout the 1990s gay men increasingly abandoned condoms. As "barebacking" has become more frequent in the baths, they have again become focal points for the spread of various sexually transmitted diseases. The most convincing (and alarming) evidence of this return of risky sexual behavior among gays is the resurgence of syphilis. After a national epidemic related to crack and prostitution in the late 1980s, rates of syphilis had dwindled low enough that in the late 1990s the CDC announced a plan to eradicate the disease altogether. But in 1999 and 2000, clusters of syphilis in gay men cropped up in several cities where the AIDS epidemic first took off. In New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, the number of cases of syphilis in homosexual men approximately doubled every year from 1998 through 2001, and it looks like they will double again this year.

In its primary and secondary stages, syphilis induces raw, oozing genital sores in which the syphilis spirochetes multiply, eager to hitch a ride on the next sex partner. These sores cause breaks in the protective layer of skin, which exposes a person's blood and immune cells to his partner's, thus throwing open the door to HIV. Experts believe that syphilis may increase the probability that HIV transmission will occur in a single sex act by a factor of anywhere from 10 to 50. While the number of new syphilis cases in gay men may seem small—in 2001 there were between 100 and 150 cases each in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco—the combined total in these cities alone is more than the 251 persons who had been reported to CDC as having AIDS in February 1982, by which time the CDC had convened a national task force to track the emergency. Perhaps most disturbing, about half of the men infected with syphilis are also infected with HIV—a pattern that not only shows how often HIV-positive men are having unprotected sex today, but also all but guarantees that syphilis will have a huge impact on how quickly HIV is spread.

The syphilis outbreaks seem to be centered in the baths. Cities that have compiled data on the issue found that infected men like one-time pick-up sex, a practice that ensures that their partner's name remains as foreign to them as their HIV status. In California, about 25 percent of men with syphilis had had sex in baths or clubs during the time in which they were likely infected; in Seattle the number was 46 percent. In several cities, the CDC is investigating the baths' role in the epidemic. And while the results are not yet public, local health officials whom I spoke with in Los Angeles and New York were emphatic that the baths and sex clubs were critically important to the epidemics.

To health professionals such as me, syphilis outbreaks in bathhouses are a nightmare. History shows that once syphilis gets rolling, it can quickly reach epidemic proportions. Going by the number of homosexual men acquiring syphilis last year and the fact that infections are doubling every year, by 2004 there could be 12,000 cases a year—enough to qualify as the next epidemic wave of syphilis in America. With it will also come the next wave of HIV: These new syphilis cases could increase the number of gay men newly infected by HIV by thousands per year. The potential of such leaps in the number of HIV infections two decades after we've learned how to prevent them ought to scare us into action.

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Risky Business

Bathhouses are not just a haven for risky sex; in many ways they promote it. It is clear that many gay men find anonymous sex appealing, and that as long as there is a place where no-strings-attached sex with strangers is sanctioned, supported, and encouraged, plenty of them will go. But once men arrive at baths for sex, the surroundings can strongly influence how they have it.

David McKirnan, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, points out that condom use during sex "is an externally imposed diet that may not require a very powerful external stimulus to break down." In other words, the fantasy environment and sexual smorgasbord of a bathhouse are more than enough of a stimulus for many men to forego condoms. McKirnan argues that "the physical features of many sexual situations may facilitate cognitive disengagement, e.g., bars or clubs that are extremely loud, poorly lit, or that present erotic visual stimulation, or sexual settings that stress anonymity." So the very features of a bathhouse that make it easy to have sex also make it easier to have dangerous sex.

The best way—and perhaps the only way—to prevent a big new epidemic of HIV in gay men is to close these bathhouses for good. Yet, suggest this obvious solution and you will hear a litany of reasons from both gay men and many public health officials about why it can't or shouldn't be done.

The most common refrain is that if we close bathhouses, patrons will simply go someplace else for pick-up sex, and since other venues are less likely to offer condoms and reminders about safe sex, the men are likely to take even more risks. I don't buy this argument for several reasons. First, while it's true that many places besides bathhouses and sex clubs offer anonymous sex ("back rooms" of many gay bars, adult bookstores, public bathrooms, or secluded spots in municipal parks, and even temporary bathhouse-like scenes in apartments organized over the Internet), the assumption that men deprived of formal bathhouses will necessarily go elsewhere for pick-up sex is suspect. It is what Shilts derided as the "sex maniac" defense of the baths: Any gay man who derives pleasure from the bathhouse orgy scene must be so crazed that he is not influenced by the world around him.

There is much evidence to suggest that this is not so. The stories written by bath patrons on Web sites indicate that some—perhaps many—men visit baths somewhat tentatively, experimenting in havens for anonymous sex. "My friends talked me into some funny stuff to remove my inhibitions on the first time visit," wrote one, who apparently got very high or very comfortable, because later "I must have sucked about 30 guys through the glory hole." Another explained, "I consider myself straight but curious ... [O]ne afternoon when my wife was at work and I had the day off ... I got an odd urge to check on the gay scene, thinking it was just a curiosity." He then described how he was the anal receptive partner for four men in the space of just a few minutes. If these men had been forced to find anonymous partners in public bathrooms or the bushes of a city park, they might have decided to stay home. Daniel Wohlfeiler, an HIV prevention researcher at the University of California at San Francisco, who is as familiar with the baths as any expert, told me he is convinced that if the baths were closed, "a bunch" of men would not go elsewhere. The demand for anonymous sex is "somewhat determined by the supply" of places where men can get it.

Second, the argument that bathhouse sex is safer than sex elsewhere is just plain wrong. While bathhouses don't sell alcohol, many men drink at bars or take drugs elsewhere before visiting them. Given the level of intoxication of bath patrons, any intentions to have safe sex are often lost in a fog of drugs. Everyone I spoke to agreed that men in baths virtually never use condoms during oral sex. Even during the far-riskier practice of anal sex, men frequently "bareback." Twenty-one percent of those surveyed at a Portland bathhouse who had had anal sex did so without a condom.

Third, even if men in the baths went elsewhere for sex, it's unlikely that they would have the same type of sex. Physical and social settings have a great deal of influence on what actually occurs. It is more complicated to have anal sex (with or without a condom) in a public restroom or behind a park bush, where sex is rushed for fear of getting caught, than it is in a bathhouse. Consequently, these men are more likely to have oral sex, which is less likely to spread HIV. In a broad survey of behavior in four large cities, 34 percent of bathhouse patrons had had unprotected anal sex, versus only 20 percent in other cruising spots. Perhaps even more important, it would be nearly impossible for men to have multiple partners in a single park encounter—but in bathhouses, it's routine. History also argues that closing baths does indeed lower risky behavior. After San Francisco closed its baths in 1984, the number of men who had multiple partners or engaged in risky sex plummeted by about 60 percent.

But perhaps most important is the epidemiological effect that baths have on spreading sexually transmitted diseases. Most people who acquire STDs do not spread them to others, either because they have only a single sex partner (who infected them) during the period in which they're infectious, or because they use condoms when straying from their partner. Conversely, the relatively

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few people who change partners very frequently—such as bathhouse visitors—can infect scores. Experts who develop mathematical models of STD epidemics call these people "core transmitters." They are, as one writer put it, the people who "keep the critical mass critical." If an infected core transmitter comes into contact with men who are unlikely to spread the disease—even a large number of them—he will infect many, but won't trigger an epidemic. If, on the other hand, a core transmitter has sex with just a few other core transmitters, something akin to a nuclear chain reaction takes place, causing the disease to explode in a population. One need look no further than the example of America's most famous core transmitter, bathhouse enthusiast Gaetan Dugas.

When I suggested to colleagues at the STD meeting that the baths should be closed, many (though not all) agreed. But even those who agreed seemed to recoil at the idea of actually doing it.

Thus the speed at which HIV travels through a population is determined in large part by who is having sex with whom. The best way to spark an epidemic is to create opportunities for core transmitters to have sex with each other. Bathhouses—magnets for core transmitters designed precisely for one-time sex with multiple partners—do just that.

Power to the People?

When I told several colleagues at a recent national STD meeting that I thought the resurgence of gay men having anonymous sex probably spelled the end of our hopes of eliminating syphilis and a comeback of the AIDS epidemic, all agreed. But rather than jump into discussions about how to respond, most seemed to fall into despair.

This stems partly from a pervasive feeling of powerlessness. Dr. Peter Kerndt, the director for the STD Program at the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, told me, "If the gay community won't protect itself, we can't protect them." I've heard variations on this sentiment from many public health professionals, but it continues to puzzle me. Clearly, the gay community as a whole is supportive of safe sex, since the majority of men either don't frequent baths or use condoms when they do. It is unclear to me what the "gay community" can do about the minority of men who continue having high-risk sex. Without an organizing structure, designated leaders, or an enforcement arm, it is they who are powerless. Bathhouses are, after all, for-profit businesses that trade in anonymous sex and risk losing money if they stop providing an experience (unsafe sex) that appeals to even a minority of customers; they simply can't be trusted to police themselves.

Government, on the other hand, is supposed to have the power to prevent a few people or businesses from threatening the broader public health. The despair among government officials like my colleagues stems from a structure and culture developed during the AIDS epidemic that is based on inclusion and cooperation rather than enforcement. This government culture seems to have grown as a response to AIDS activism in the 1980s, which itself was a response to the lethargy government agencies initially displayed toward this plague of historic proportions. AIDS activism, which embraced such tactics as haranguing experts at scientific meetings, blockading FDA headquarters, and pressuring politicians to cough up public money for prevention and treatment, effectively prodded government agencies into taking steps to curb the epidemic that otherwise might never have happened. But in an era when politicians of all stripes argued that all government was bad, it also made agencies adopt a very defensive posture. To deflect criticism, public health agencies began accepting on faith that all of their own judgments were faulty, that all opponents had legitimate positions, and that all interested people (no matter how self-interested) should be appeased by including them in decision-making.

Public health agencies, operating HIV prevention programs based in large part on grants from the CDC, are required by congressional mandate to spend these funds under the direction of a committee "representing the community" and co-chaired by a community member. In most cases this means the majority of committee members are gay men, former drug users, and others who work with them, most of whom vigorously protect the right of high-risk people to do what they want to do. As beneficial as this system may be in building mutual trust, it prohibits health departments from taking virtually any action to prevent AIDS that contains even the barest whiff of enforcement. Inclusion can be a

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good thing in planning public policy—but it can also be taken too far, as when it gives people veto power that imperils public health. Imagine if the local health department couldn't shut down a restaurant serving salmonella without first securing the permission of restaurant owners.

Because of this structure and the culture surrounding it, little enforcement actually occurs in the baths around the country. In San Francisco, health officials inspect sex clubs about twice a month to make sure that safe-sex posters are displayed and condoms are available; they also write vaguely threatening letters to clubs named by patients with syphilis as permitting unprotected sex. New York takes almost the opposite approach; the city sends inspectors to gay bars and other sites to make sure customers are not having sex in open areas, and will shut them down if they are; but it ignores baths where sex takes place behind closed doors. To my knowledge, baths in other cities are unfettered by health inspectors.

This lackluster state of enforcement is the final remnant of the bathhouse battles of the 1980s: Elected officials delegated decision-making to the courts, which delegated it to health departments, which educated owners about safe sex and then delegated enforcement to them. Bathhouse owners, in turn, delegated responsibility to their patrons, who stopped using condoms and once again started spreading HIV and syphilis.

When I suggested to several colleagues at the STD meeting that the baths should be closed, many (though not all) agreed. But even those who agreed seemed to recoil at the idea of actually doing it. The reason is partly the past success of our cooperative approach to HIV prevention. But I can't help wondering if a part of the reason is also fear—fear of being shouted down at meetings by activists, or of being politically undercut or fired by elected officials, some of whom may receive campaign donations from bathhouse owners and gay advocacy groups. The risks don't stop there, though. Dr. Jeffrey Klausner, the director of STD Prevention and Control Services in San Francisco, was quoted in a *Washington Monthly* story last November ("When Rubbers Hit the Road," by Andrew Webb) as being in favor of closing sex clubs; he received repeated death threats, as did his family. During the bathhouse battles of 1984, Shilts writes, San Francisco health director Mervyn Silverman received so many death threats that he started wearing a bulletproof vest.

Ban the Baths

Most baths do take steps to encourage condom use. They have reminder posters on the walls, and bowls of condoms placed throughout the establishment. Some offer regular HIV testing. But prevention usually stops there. Many baths do not even have signs telling men that sex without condoms is forbidden, much less eject them if rules are violated. Because of the cooperative model for containing AIDS that arose in the 1980s and still reigns, public health agencies are at a tremendous disadvantage: Even those that recognize the danger of bathhouses can only try various modes of persuasion.

To prevent the spread of HIV, most agencies fund community-based AIDS service organizations that conduct "outreach to" (not "inspections of") bathhouses, an approach not of enforcement but supplication. As Wohlfeiler put it, public health officials are usually grateful when owners are "magnanimous" enough to let them in the door. This encouragement-without-enforcement approach seemed to work in the late 1980s, when gay men terrified of the epidemic adopted condoms pretty faithfully. But the syphilis outbreaks now make it clear that we need a new strategy. With the activists and the courts potentially protecting the status quo in bathhouses, it's worth considering what steps could be taken short of outright closure. One possibility is for cities nationwide to couple San Francisco's ban on sex in closed-door rooms with serious enforcement of condom use, so that public health inspectors can catch—and stop—risky behavior. There is evidence to suggest that a strict enforcement policy could work. Buzz Bense, the owner of a San Francisco sex club called Club Eros, requires customers to read and sign an agreement stipulating that they will follow the rules, which include using condoms. Club goers have sex in open, well-lit rooms, observed by staff members who circulate at regular intervals. Those caught having anal sex without condoms are kicked out; repeat offenders lose their membership. Bense says that customers accept these rules (he throws out fewer than five a month) and even appreciate them, since they no longer have to negotiate condom use. But to reliably prevent HIV spread, even strict enforcement by club owners would require an additional layer of government enforcement.

Until recently, the HIV epidemic seemed to be waning in all major groups: gay men, IV drug users, and high-risk heterosexuals. But the syphilis outbreaks not only tell us that our hopes of eliminating this disease with the next decade are gone, but also confirm predictions that we will see a second wave of HIV infection in gay men. If we want to keep this second wave at bay we must make dramatic changes in how we deal with the baths. Unless we are willing to hire plenty of full-time condom inspectors for the long haul—a strategy that history tells us may fail—we ought to finish the job we started in the 1980s and close the baths for good. ●

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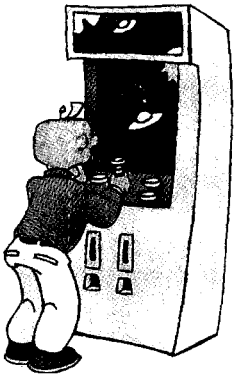
Tidbits & Outrages
(Special International Edition!)

My big, fat Greek felony

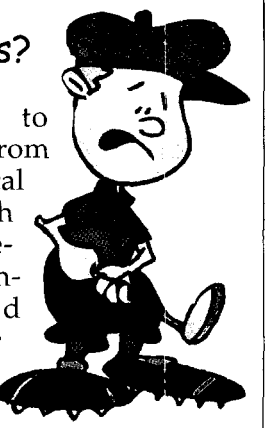


Greece has taken the unusual step of outlawing electronic games in an effort to stop illegal gambling. Video and computer games, Game Boys, and even games on mobile phones will draw stiff fines and even prison terms for Greeks—and tourists.

...And firemen are selling burritos

In an effort to boost tourism, Mexico City police are trading in their traditional brown uniforms for mariachi suits and sombreros, which officials hope will draw visitors, despite rising crime rates.

Will HMOs cover caddies?



In a plan sure to draw support from across the political spectrum, British doctors are prescribing government-subsidized golf lessons for out-of-shape patients.

The "prescriptions" include one-on-one medical supervision on the fairway and deeply discounted course fees.

You'd have to be crazy to run for office

In Argentina, where the economy has collapsed and the most popular political slogan on the streets is "Get Rid of Them All!," a bill before the National Congress would require politicians to undergo psychiatric tests to ensure that they are mentally fit to hold office.

Forget donuts, pass the fries

Police officers in Birmingham, England, are being issued vouchers to eat at McDonald's and other fast-food joints. Officials are promoting higher police visibility by encouraging officers to eat in public places in hopes that it will discourage crime.

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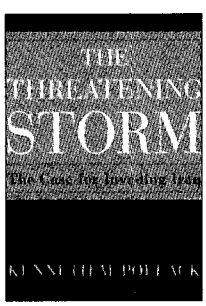
The Reluctant Hawk

The skeptical case for regime change in Iraq.

BY JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL

LATE LAST SPRING, I ASKED ONE OF Washington's more notable Iraq hawks, Danielle Pletka, her opinion of Ken Pollack. "Oh, Ken 'my-mind-has-changed-so-often' Pollack?" she zinged back with satisfied ridicule. Pletka has a flair for the sound bite. But behind that barb lies a tale. From 1992 until earlier this year, Pletka was Jesse Helms's chief senior professional staff member for Near East and South Asia on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In that role, she was one of the key players using any means necessary to press a deeply reluctant Clinton administration to adopt the policy of "regime change" for Iraq. During the 1990s, Iraq cut through the surface of American political life only at those occasional moments when the Iraqis would buck some demand and the United States would lob over a few cruise missiles to knock them back into line. Behind the scenes, however, especially in the latter part of the decade, Iraq policy became a virtually nonstop foreign policy street fight, pitting hawkish congressional staffers like Pletka and other out-of-government regime-change crusaders against administration officials like Pollack, who was National Security Council director for Persian Gulf affairs from 1999 to 2001.



THE THREATENING STORM: The Case for Invading Iraq
by Ken Pollack
Random House, $25.95

Through tours at the CIA, the NSC, National Defense University, and back at the NSC again, Pollack developed a reputation as a hawk—by Clinton administration standards—and as a steady opponent of the Iraq hawks' efforts to shove American policy behind Iraqi opposition leaders who would, they claimed, overthrow Saddam through some hybrid of an insurrection and a coup. The target of Pletka's barb was an article Pollack wrote in the March/April 2002 issue of *Foreign Affairs* in which he announced that the United States should, after all, invade Iraq to settle the Saddam problem once and for all. To the hawks who had been crusading for "regime change" for years, Pollack was simply shifting positions to suit the changing guard in George W.'s Washington. Not a few of his former Clinton administration colleagues agreed. In truth, Pollack's change was not so stark as his critics alleged, since he still strenuously opposed the Bay-of-Pigs-style overthrow that the hawks supported. The calculus of domestic political support, moreover, had changed dramatically after September 11. But the article played a key role in making a military solution to the Iraq problem respectable within the nation's foreign policy establishment.

The Threatening Storm is Pollack's follow-up to and expansion of that article, in which he presents a thoroughgoing case for invading Iraq in the context of a detailed history of U.S.-Iraq relations stretching back some 30 years. Pollack has spent virtually his entire professional life wrestling with the problem of Iraq. (In the summer of 1990, for instance, he was a junior CIA analyst dashing off prescient, but largely disregarded, memos predicting that Saddam Hussein would invade Kuwait.) And he manages to use this personal knowledge without abusing it, resisting the temptation to load the book with too many anecdotes about his own exploits in the D.C.-Iraq wars or to settle too many

JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL *writes the* Talking Points Memo *(www.talkingpointsmemo.com).*

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scores, of which there are no doubt many. Running almost 400 pages, the final product could have done with a more rigorous edit. There is a lot of repetition, and the writing often falls short of elegance. Still, the book is not intended as a work of literary nonfiction, but as an effort to provide a complete treatment of a critical question of national security policy. By that measure, it's an indisputable success. Pollack manages to eschew the cant, stupidity, and obfuscation which are the common currency of much of the current public debate over Iraq policy and has produced one of the key books—probably *the* key book—for anyone trying to grapple with the Iraq question.

Nuclear Hinter

For Pollack, the "threatening storm" isn't a sudden crisis. He expresses little fear that Saddam will make any serious trouble in the near future or that he'll actually threaten the United States proper for some time to come. This is a different kind of argument. Pollack sketches out a series of intersecting trends that, he argues, will almost certainly make Saddam into a very big threat in the near future. He further argues that there is really no good way to prevent that from happening short of a military overthrow of the current regime. And he makes a pretty convincing case.

The essence of the problem is straightforward. Iraq sits astride the chokepoint of the world economy, the oil-rich Middle East. Saddam has a long history of aggression, brutality, and, most important, ill-considered and reckless actions. So long as he has only conventional weapons we can overawe him with our armed forces and clobber him back into line if he misbehaves. Once he gets nuclear weapons, though, everything will change. And there is little doubt that, left to his own devices, he will acquire them in the not-too-distant future. (One theme running through this book is Pollack's belief—no doubt accurate—that nuclear weapons are the real issue, with chemicals and bioweapons running several laps behind. Frightening as they are, it is simply very difficult to kill large numbers of people with chemical or biological weapons.)

The problem isn't that Saddam will just start tossing off nukes for the hell of it. Readers will find none of the deception and hysteria most Iraq hawks pepper their arguments with in public debate. There's no talk about nuclear blackmail over American cities, and little speculation about al Qaeda-Saddam alliances. The problem, Pollack explains, is Saddam's dangerously dysfunctional relationship with the outside world, one likely to grow infinitely worse if he gets the bomb. Saddam is often portrayed as shrewd and wily—and in certain contexts he is. But he's more of a serial self-deceiver, a strongman from the provinces surrounded by tremulous yes-men who fear giving him bad news. As a result, he has a history of wild miscalculation, of running risks that are likely far greater than even he imagined. In 1980, for instance, he tried to grab some land from Iran, a bigger neighbor. He wound up losing a million troops, and gaining not an inch of new territory. Pollack also reveals that, according to our best intelligence, Saddam assumed that when he invaded Kuwait, America would respond militarily. He just figured he could beat us.

Were he to get his hands on nuclear weapons, Saddam would likely resume his quest to become the hegemon of the Persian Gulf. Only now he'd be operating under his own nuclear umbrella, believing—not without some justification—that his nukes would deter us. Of course, we have more nukes than he would have. So, in theory, this ought to allow us to deter his aggression. Indeed, defenders of this deterrence strategy note that Saddam didn't use chemical or biological weapons during the Gulf War after the Bush administration hinted that were he to do so the United States would respond with nuclear weapons.

It's easy to say that Saddam won't do this or that because if he did we'd "nuke" him, or "exterminate" him, or "annihilate" him, or whatever. But in practice, would we really drop the big one on Iraq? Saddam has some reason to think we might not. Pollack reveals that during the Gulf War the Bush administration also hinted at a nuclear response if Saddam blew up Kuwaiti oil fields. Saddam ignored the threat, torched the fields, and suffered no nuclear retaliation. Say he calls our bluff again and blows up Riyadh or perhaps a few Saudi oil fields. Deterrence theory suggests that we should respond by vaporizing Baghdad. But that city has a population of some 5 million. Will an American president really sign off on an attack that might well kill in a single blow nearly as many men, women, and children as died in the Holocaust? More to the point, do we ever want an American president to face that choice?

Brass Action

If deterrence is unlikely to work against Saddam, what about the alternative policy that many critics of regime change advocate: containment? After all, containment has kept Saddam from any major mischief for a decade. Couldn't we just run out the clock and wait

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for the guy to die? The answer, Pollack argues—again persuasively—is no. To begin with, no American administration ever chose the containment policy. Its pillars—economic sanctions, inspections, no-fly zones and the rest—were hastily assembled in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War with the assumption that Saddam's regime could not last long and would in any case abide by U.N. disarmament resolutions. When it became clear that neither assumption was true, bureaucrats and mid-level political appointees—first under Bush senior and then under Clinton—began cobbling these pieces together into a policy that would keep Iraq on ice until something better came along. Only nothing ever did. And though containment did keep Saddam in the proverbial box for many years, over time it became a running wound, one that Saddam could tolerate far better than we.

Yes, war against Iraq would be violent, destructive, and destabilizing. But containment policy has similar results—just spread out over time. And containment probably won't keep Saddam from eventually obtaining nuclear warheads.

Economic sanctions, the noose around Saddam's throat, have been getting looser for years—in part due to progressive adjustments by the United Nations, in part to the increasingly open flouting of the sanctions by Iraq's neighbors. Every year the burden of sanctions weighs lighter on Saddam—the regime gets to sell more oil for humanitarian and other non-military purposes. As the flow of revenue rises, more can be skimmed off for military objectives. And every year the diplomatic capital we must expend to keep the sanctions in place grows. The Muslim world blames us for the civilian deaths, the images of dying babies—even if these tragedies are mainly due to Saddam's manipulation of sanctions rather than the sanctions themselves. Similarly, we pay a heavy price for the garrisons that we maintain in the region to keep Iraq contained. One needn't be an Osama bin Laden appeaser to recognize that the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia has been a major rallying cry for al Qaeda recruitment. All told, if Saddam's in a box, we're in there with him. Yes, war against Iraq would be violent, destructive, and destabilizing. What supporters of containment often ignore is that their policy has quite similar results—just spread out over time. And for all its geopolitical costs, Pollack argues, containment still probably won't keep Saddam from eventually obtaining nuclear warheads. Which of course brings us back to unworkable deterrence.

Saddam and Gomorrah

War hawks in the press have embraced Pollack's book for its thorough dismantling of the policy of equivocation and postponement which the United States long pursued and which he himself once, albeit perhaps grudgingly, endorsed. He actually opposes, for instance, the entire effort to take one more crack at inspections, even if only as a tactical prelude to war. Pollack argues, with some persuasiveness, that inspections are simply a losing game since Saddam can flip back and forth between compliance and obstruction far more quickly than we can mobilize a credible threat to overthrow his regime. If today, for instance, we build up a massive 200,000- to 300,000-man force on his borders Saddam can comply with inspections for, say, six months or a year. But it would be extremely onerous for us in military, diplomatic, and economic terms to keep such a force in place for that long. Probably impossible. Eventually, the United States would have to stand down its forces and at that point the same old cat-and-mouse game would resume—no doubt, only to be followed in turn by more build-ups and more compliance and then more draw downs and more obstruction. Eventually, the United States would have to say, "Time's up," and invade, whether or not Iraq began another period of compliance. So why, Pollack asks, not just do it now?

The answer, as recent weeks seem to have shown, is that we have interests beyond the Middle East which make it worth going through the old cat-and-mouse game one more time. The complexities of getting the U.N. Security Council on board—at least in acquiescence to, if not in support of—U.S. policy, securing the same from our NATO allies, and giving international law its due if not being subservient to it, all argue in favor of giving sanctions one more try even if we know Saddam will just be up to his old tricks.

But if Pollack's endorsement of the necessity of regime change by force is congenial to conservatives,

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the book also bristles with warnings about, and contempt for, the slapdash and ill-considered way most of the Iraq hawks want to prosecute the coming war. Pollack shares the fears of most of America's uniformed military that the current administration will somehow try to effect regime change on the cheap, winging it with some mix of airpower, special forces, and opposition militias. Doing so, the brass believes, would probably produce more American combat casualties than would be the case if we went in with overwhelming force. Yes, a lighter, faster strike might succeed, as it did in Afghanistan. But it might not. And in the time it took to succeed, or more likely to fail, the violence and commotion might push our allies' governments to the breaking point or beyond.

Most of our moderate Arab allies share that fear. One of Pollack's most noteworthy claims is that they would actually prefer that we invade Iraq and settle the whole matter once and for all—at least after the current round of Israeli-Palestinian bloodletting slows to a tolerable level. Their key concern is that the United States do it quickly, decisively, and without leaving a doubt. (One often hears such things from Middle East experts—what Arab leaders *really* say to them in private as opposed to what they say publicly. Unless you're one of the select group of people who have frequent heart-to-heart talks with high-ranking Arab government ministers, you just have to take the person's word for it.) Why are the Arabs so keen on our using overwhelming military force to do the job? Because anything less risks failure, or at least a long, more drawn-out conflict, either of which could destabilize their regimes. One issue that never gets quite enough attention in this book is the fact that many of the supporters of war in the current administration don't really care how destabilizing a strike against Iraq would be. They are, at heart, revisionists who would like to roll the dice again and come up with an entirely new Middle East, one in which many of our allies' governments wouldn't exist at all. That's clearly a view Pollack doesn't share.

A test of the current public debate over Iraq will be whether Pollack's book is received as just another endorsement of war or a much more complicated critique of the Bush administration's approach toward this war, the Middle East, and foreign and security policy in general. The current public discussion on Iraq is largely between Iraq-hawks in and outside the administration—many of whom are simply hotheads and borderline cranks—and opponents (mostly Democrats) who are hesitant to openly oppose the war and so instead seem inclined to equivocate—perhaps permanently—in the face of it. Pollack's views represent a realistic, sensible, and tough middle ground. One need not favor war to occupy that position: Pollack provides enough depth of detail and countervailing arguments to construct a case for something other than war, or at least contingent alternatives short of war, like demanding truly unfettered and intensive inspections and removal of prohibited materials under the threat of immediate and overwhelming force. In one revealing passage, Pollack tells readers about his own surprise and momentary disbelief that he is actually endorsing the invasion-first policy he proposes, but says he cannot see another viable alternative. Democrats and others who oppose the course the Bush administration has taken would do well to sit down with this book's hard reasoning and wrestle with it. After reading it, it would be hard for any sensible person not to think to themselves, "There must be some other solution." But, like Pollack, you may be hard-pressed to find one. ●

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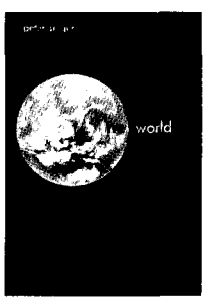
Greatest Good for the Greatest Number

Philosopher Peter Singer will anger his traditional lefty fans with a clear-eyed account of the benefits of globalization.

BY GREGG EASTERBROOK

YES, IT'S THAT PETER SINGER. THE one who has suggested that animals sometimes have the same rights as people, that the old should be euthanized to divert resources to the young (though he would spare his own infirm mother), that Americans should give away almost everything they possess to the developing world and live themselves like the developing world's poor (Singer donates to charity but he hasn't given almost everything away, as he advised others to do, and won't give to bums on the street). The Peter Singer who has said that utilitarian arguments can justify killing the innocent if benefits to others are large (a chilling thought, but also U.S. policy, as it is on utilitarian grounds that U.S. forces have killed some innocent people during the campaign against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan; presumably, Singer supports this). The Peter Singer who has suggested that severely handicapped infants should be killed for their own good (strangely, only people who were not born severely handicapped take this view), whom *The New Yorker* has called the world's "most influential living philosopher" (which mainly tells us how little anyone cares about living philosophers, a state of affairs which the profession has largely brought on itself), and whose appointment to a chair at Princeton University aroused considerable alumni protests and the cancellation of some pledges. People have even protested the name of the chair he holds—Singer is now the Ira DeCamp Professor of Bioethics at the University Center for Human Values of Princeton. How can Singer have a chair at the University Center for Human Values, the line goes, when he is inhuman?



ONE WORLD:
The Ethics of Globalization
by Peter Singer
Yale University Press, $21.95

Yes, that Peter Singer. Since his views are much hashed over, it may be best to skip beyond his prior statements here, other than to make two points. First, as I wrote in the previous paragraph, Singer has "suggested" most of his notorious positions. There is, in fact, an awful lot of high-class weasel-wording in his work, indicating either that he can't make up his mind or that he wants to have it both ways, grabbing attention by saying stark things, then indignantly claiming misquotation and pointing to some buried caveat when attacked. Second, when *The New Yorker* called him out on how he can say that other people's aging mothers should be put down like old horses but that his own should receive only the very best care in an expensive nursing home, Singer replied, "Perhaps it's more difficult than I thought before, because it is different when it

GREGG EASTERBROOK *is a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly *and* The Atlantic Monthly, *a senior editor of* The New Republic, *a visiting fellow in economics at the Brookings Institution, and writes the Tuesday Morning Quarterback column for ESPN.com. His next book,* The Here and Now, *will be published in December.*

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is your mother." So my grand pronouncements apply to everyone else but not me! There's a word for this. And, as Peter Berkowitz has written, someone who presents himself to the world as an ethicist is supposed to have thought through the practical consequences of his ethics.

These points aside, *One World* is a pretty good book; if it did not come with Peter Singer baggage, I might say a darn good book. Singer, generally a hero to the loony left, struggles with the issues of globalization in a rigorously hard-headed manner rarely seen on this topic. Singer discards, or even shreds, much anti-globalization cant, focusing on which international economic policies will have the utilitarian outcome of raising living standards for the developing world's poor. (Singer does not much care for the term utilitarianism, but it is the best shorthand for his value system, whose fine points cannot be fit into this space; broadly, he wants to raise the standards at which the human race lives as a whole to the highest aggregate level, which entails focusing upon the disadvantages of the developing world, and thinks our obligations to all members of genus Homo have about the same standing as obligations to our nation, to our ethnic group, and even our own children.) He proposes that formation of a "global ethical community" roughly along U. N. lines should be a sustained, long-term historic objective, but is realistic about the need to work within the existing framework of nations and borders pretty much indefinitely. And, crucially, he is not opposed to economic globalization. He asks the big question that anti-globalizers always dodge, namely: If we did away with globalization, would the poor of the developing world be better off? No, he answers, to do so would leave them worse off. This is the big point missing from the whole debate, and it's impressive that Singer has locked on to it.

Let me offer against *One World* the objection analysts often make against sweeping arguments, that when the specifics enter some field that one knows personally, the author is off target. Singer devotes a chapter to the atmosphere, viewing pollution, especially greenhouse gases, as an incredibly horrible assault on the global commons. But he doesn't understand the science well, saying, for example, "By spraying deodorant at your armpit in your New York apartment" you could be "killing people" by contributing to stratospheric ozone depletion. Not unless you were using a really old can of deodorant; CFCs, the ozone-depletion agent, have been banned in spray cans in the United States for 24 years (and banned in all uses for about a decade). And though ozone depletion is real, there is no evidence it has ever harmed anyone, much less taken lives.

Similarly, Singer declares that while the prosperous G8 nations may be able to deal with global warming "without enormous loss of life," the developing world will not. Yet global warming so far hasn't harmed one single person. The mild temperature increases of the past century have coincided with an unprecedented global agricultural boom, staving off the predicted developing-world mass starvations and saving many tens of millions of lives. If global warming so far has been beneficial, there are good reasons to fear that future warming will not be. This is an argument for reform—and an argument why the oil-loving Bush administration is wrong to put off action against artificial greenhouse gases. There is also a strong argument that the United States, having emitted the largest share of greenhouse gases, has an obligation to bear the largest cost of reform. But only the over-the-top doomsday types project "enormous loss of life" from a future artificial greenhouse effect. No such forecast is found in the projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the U.N. affiliate that is the source of global warming scientific consensus. Singer seems to feel he has to offer at least something to his fans on the loony left, and an overheated chapter about the atmosphere is what they get.

Once Singer gets to the economics of globalization, he is on surer footing. He notes, for example, that you can't complain that nationalism is bad and then also complain that the World Trade Organization erodes national sovereignty. And he notes that the main effect of NAFTA, denounced by the anti-globalization left as a tool of corporate oligarchs, has been the creation of relatively high-paying jobs in Mexico. Half the point of NAFTA was to ship American jobs to Mexico, which is bad for American labor but great for Mexicans. "Any transfer of work from the United States to Mexico can be expected to raise the income of people who are, on average, much worse off than those U.S. workers who lose their jobs," Singer writes. "Those who favor reducing poverty globally, rather than just in their own country, should see this as a good thing." Indeed, NAFTA has always struck me as a huge gift from the people of the United States to the people of Mexico, if a gift that not all Americans wished to give. Why the globalization debate does not see it this way is hard to fathom, other than that, perhaps, it is simply taboo to say anything favorable about the current trends in free-market economics.

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The analysis in *One World* is sharpest and newest where Singer takes on the endlessly repeated charge that the globalizing economy is increasing international inequality. Everyone from anti-globalizers to editorialists repeats this as a matter of cant, skipping the inconvenient data that show otherwise. Most factual claims of rising international inequality, Singer reports, are drawn from the 1999 edition of the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report, an indispensable reference whose latest edition sits on my desk. The 1999 Human Development Report included a statistical analysis which asserted that international inequality was increasing. The problem? That section contained numerous flaws and was essentially retracted by the 2001 Human Development Report. Those who delight in bad news cite the 1999 report without mentioning the 2001 retraction.

Most claims of disparate income are based on absolute dollars—that is, $1,000 in one place versus $100 in another. But buying power is what really matters. Even in the United States alone, $100 in Ames, Iowa goes further than $100 in New York City. Singer discusses the work of three Norwegian researchers who have applied buying-power indices to international income statistics, and found that from 1970 to 1997, as globalization was reaching around the world, international inequality steadily declined, if rather shallowly. (And the endless "widening gap between rich and poor" in the United States? This is an artifact of the huge rise in legal immigration in the last two decades. Factor out the low incomes of the newly arrived foreign-born, and the gap between rich and poor Americans is shrinking. But that's a story for another day.)

Singer discusses the rarely commented-upon trend that most indicators, including standards-of-living, are positive in the developing world and have been positive throughout the period of rising globalization. Average incomes there almost doubled from 1975 to 1999; even if you subtract for oil-enriched developing nations with unusually high GDPs per capita, global average income rose. Global literacy is rising, and with it developing world levels of education and average developing world caloric intake. In 1975, one third of nations were holding true multiparty elections; today two-thirds do. Slightly over a billion people still live on a dollar a day, a shocking figure that rises slightly every year. But it rises at less than the rate of global population growth, meaning the percentage of the world's people living in destitution is ever declining. That incomes, education, and literacy could all rise globally during a period of population explosion is a tribute to the developing world itself—but then, it is also taboo to say anything favorable about developing nations. We are supposed to pretend they know nothing but despair.

Singer asks the big question that anti-globalizers always dodge, namely: If we did away with globalization, would the poor of the developing world be better off?

"What matters is people's welfare, not the size of the gap between rich and poor," Singer writes. And individual welfare is increasing in the developing world, though it still has a long way to go. Typical global welfare has increased under a regime of globalization. Maybe someday there will be a better system; market economics can't possibly be the best humanity can do, it is just the best system available so far. But for all its many problems, globalization is mainly making most people better off. "Without globalization the rise in inequality would have been greater still," believes Singer.

One World proceeds from there to argue that while it is reasonable for men and women to feel somewhat more responsible to family or community members, or to others of their own nation, than to the distant poor, no prosperous person can ever shed all obligations to the distant poor. This is a common-sense amendment of Singer's previous suggestions that our neighbors and children should mean no more to us than the distant poor—which was a view with not the remotest practical chance of being adopted in the real world. From there, Singer argues not for the wild global redistribution schemes suggested by his previous writings but for big increases in foreign aid and the lowering of Western trade barriers so that developing world nations can expand their economies by selling to well-off nations which can afford to buy. Both are excellent ideas—and hint that this is an ethicist who may be learning to think through the practical consequences of his ethics. ●

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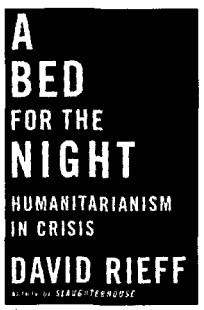
Aid and Comfort

David Rieff's eloquent—but dated— meditations on the failure of humanitarian action.

BY JACOB HEILBRUNN

WHILE THE WEST IS CURRENTLY fixated on whether and how to confront Saddam Hussein, several thousand miles away another military strongman is on the verge of committing genocide. Zimbabwe's president-for-life, Robert Mugabe, has set out to create a famine in the mold of Stalin in the Ukraine and Mao in China. To buttress his sagging support in the country, Mugabe has uprooted thousands of white farmers, turning their estates over to militants and supporters—none of whom, it turns out, know how to farm them. The hundreds of thousands of blacks who *do* know how aren't being included in the reform; rather they, too, are targets of Mugabe's thugs and goons. And though the United Nations estimates that six to eight million Zimbabweans are at risk of starving to death, the only realistic way to avert disaster is to confront Mugabe directly, through stiff international sanctions and the threat of military intervention. But South Africa, which controls Zimbabwe's electric grid, banking system, and weapons supply, refuses to take action. And aside from voicing its concern and sending in diplomats to talk to Mugabe, the international community is doing nothing.

You can pretty much guess where this is heading. Millions of Zimbabweans will either die or wind up in refugee camps, where they will be cared for by an array of well-meaning humanitarian aid agencies, such as the Red Cross and CARE, none of them capable of preventing violence. The international community will feel ashamed at having allowed genocide to fall upon Africa yet again—having sworn "never again" after the Rwandan massacres of 1994—and will attempt to salve its conscience by generously funding the inevitable humanitarian efforts. And Mugabe, his political opponents conveniently stuck in refugee camps, will have achieved what he set out to do in the first place.



A BED FOR THE NIGHT: Humanitarianism in Crisis
by David Rieff
Simon & Schuster, $26.00

David Rieff is no stranger to such perversities. In the past decade, he has traveled to the most troubled regions of the globe, from the Balkans to Afghanistan. But the emotional pole-vaulting—landing in one zone of crisis only to leap off to the next—has left him with a nagging sense of guilt. And he is just as troubled about the ambiguous role that humanitarian institutions play in the world. Whether it's the work of Oxfam in Ethiopia in the mid-1980s, which helped to prop up the murderous Mengistu government; or Médecins Sans Frontières, which was created to fight a genocide in Biafra that may not have been taking place; or humanitarian aide to Bosnia in the early 1990s, which became an alibi for the West's inaction, the record of humanitarianism is not as unblemished as it might seem. In his new book, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis*, Rieff wonders: When is intervention justified? To what extent are humanitarian agencies pawns of the governments they are trying to assist—or whose horrors they seek to minimize?

Checkbook Interventionism

Rieff has produced something very far removed from the many arid studies of NGOs produced by industrious Ph.D. students over recent years. Elegiac in tone, *A Bed*

JACOB HEILBRUNN *is a member of the* Los Angles Times *editorial board.*

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for the Night is closer to a meditation than a closely argued text. Surveying the history of humanitarian action and its recent failures in Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, Rieff asks whether humanitarianism has reached a moral and intellectual terminus. Hard experience has led Rieff to the conviction that the efforts of humanitarian organizations to help battered populations rest far too heavily upon a simplistic, sentimental refusal to face facts. He quotes Mary B. Anderson, an influential American thinker on relief, as noting that aid "provided in conflict settings can feed into and exacerbate the conflicts that cause the suffering it is meant to alleviate." In recent years, relief organizations have attempted to go beyond their traditional mandate of alleviating suffering to the weightier task of preventing it. This puts aid agencies like Oxfam, which are supposed to be neutral parties, in the uncomfortable position of having to lobby governments and the United Nations for funds and even military action. Rieff finds this disquieting. "Can an ideal based on both universal values and unbending neutrality be politicized successfully?" he asks. "The price for such a transformation would seem to be very high—perhaps too high."

"If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever," wrote Orwell. But perhaps he was—dare we say it—wrong?

So gloomy is Rieff's view that he sees the rot at the creation. The moral obligation of the fortunate to help the afflicted was a mainstay of Enlightenment thought from the very beginning. Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered it to be among the "natural feelings." Adam Smith saw it as "inherent." But Rieff is quick to note that humanitarianism, at least in the 19th century, went hand-in-hand with colonialism and oppression. According to Rieff, "the missionaries' dedication to succoring the sick, the wounded, and the poor, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, their commitment to eradicating slavery in Africa, were also justification first for conquest and then for imperial domination."

If humanitarianism was a kind of ideology of uplift in the 19th century, Rieff believes it is just as insidious today. He detects nothing less than a surrogate religion to replace the failed faith of Marxism among secular, Western adherents of Enlightenment thought. "How," Rieff asks, "in less than thirty years, could an ethos that, for all its grandeur and moral ambition, was initially realistic enough to understand that it could aspire to do little more than alleviate suffering have become the principal vehicle for the moral hopes of so many in the West?"

The answer, Rieff suggests, is that humanitarianism may be less about the recipients than the donors. He describes a kind of checkbook interventionism, wherein Western nations salve their uneasy consciences by throwing a few dollars at slick, well-equipped NGOs. But while the NGOs wage ineffectual holding actions against famine, disease, and dislocation, the donors move on, never to think more deeply about what kinds of regimes create these emergencies or whether the West can do anything about the underlying diseases. Thus, while boosters of the new humanitarianism herald a "revolution of moral concern," Rieff fears that the vaunted "modern conscience" is little more than a way for the West to "delegate its guilt and its anxiety to the designated consciences of the world of relief, development, and human rights."

What Rieff skates over, however, is that the terms of engagement that applied in the early to mid-1990s, when he first started reporting from crisis zones like Bosnia, have largely been jettisoned. Of course, there are humanitarian crises that the United States and its European allies are doing their best to ignore. The United States is neither intervening nor even pressuring South Africa to stop Mugabe. But war in the Balkans largely discredited the idea that humanitarian action can be a surrogate for military power. In Kosovo, it was concentrated bombing—not food drops—that defeated the Serbs. Kosovars have enjoyed free elections and an uneasy truce that, for all its faults, has held. So Rieff's apprehensions about humanitarianism serving as fig leaf for the major powers to do nothing seems misplaced. The real danger is that neither takes place.

Rieff's anger at the votaries of a new world order may also lead him a bit astray. He denounces Bernard Kouchner, for instance, who was appointed by Kofi Annan to run the U.N. protectorate installed following the Serb withdrawal from Kosovo. At the time, Kouchner babbled that "we have to forge a new ideal for European and world youth based on a constant rejection of wars, a strong-hearted world democracy." Intervention, Kouchner said, "can be summed up quite simply ... Auschwitz never again, Pol Pot never again, Kosovo and Rwanda atrocities never more." This stuff is easy to ridicule. But Rieff is so busy whacking Kouchner that he gives short

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shrift to the decent job the United Nations is doing in Kosovo.

For that matter, Rieff himself is conflicted about the actual effectiveness of aid agencies. On the one hand, he is wearied, after 10 years of following relief works, to see how little change has taken place. On the other hand, he rightly admires the efforts of aid workers: "There is nothing small or insufficient about what they do, except, that is, in the tragic human sense that all effort is insufficient, all glory transient, all solutions inadequate to the challenge, all aid insufficient to the need." To Rieff, the thought police in Orwell's *1984* got it right: "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever."

But perhaps Orwell was—dare one say it?—wrong. The world is slowly becoming a better place, and at least part of that improvement can be traced to the role that humanitarian agencies have come to occupy in foreign policy. No longer can State Department officials blithely dismiss famines and massacres taking place abroad as immaterial to American interests. Even the classic realpolitik definition of stability is undergoing a profound change, at least in the eyes of policymakers. Whether it's Afghanistan or debating how to rebuild a postwar Iraq, the dominant argument today is that abandoning a nation to internal strife is more dangerous to America than remaining aloof. It's hard to see how humanitarian agencies themselves can remain wholly detached from the political environment in which they're operating, or whether they even should. They may well be burdened with "Western" notions of enlightenment and progress. But what, ultimately, is so bad about that?●

The Washington Monthly's Monthly Journalism Award

Ryan Lizza

"He Ain't Heavy"

The New Republic, July 29, 2002

By poring over Federal Assistance Award Data System records—listings of all types of financial assistance awarded by federal agencies—Ryan Lizza discovered that the Bush administration has been lavishing Florida with a disproportionate share of federal dollars and visits by Washington big shots, including many by the president himself. The Sunshine State was Bush's ticket to the White House in 2000 (albeit contested) and could be once again in 2004. A victory by brother Jeb Bush in Florida's gubernatorial race this fall would go a long way toward securing it. Lizza contrasts the way the press has ignored the Bush conflict of interest with the intense media scrutiny accorded the Clinton White House when Hillary Clinton ran for the Senate. He also explains why no one has sounded the alarm—Florida Republicans are eager to see the Bushes win, while Florida Democrats have a hard time complaining about being the recipient of federal largesse.

Ien Cheng, Caroline Daniel & Andrew Hill

"The Barons of Bankruptcy"

The Financial Times, July 31-August 2, 2002

The Financial Times delved into executive compensation at the 25 largest U.S. public companies to go bankrupt since January 2001, reporting that in a three-year span, the "barons" made $155 million in salary and more than $240 million in other cash incentives, from discretionary bonus payments to forgiven private loans. Success may have its rewards, but this series shows that when remuneration is only loosely tied to long-term performance, failure pays nicely, too.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005. Or e-mail us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com. Nominations for stories run in September 2002 are due November 5, 2002.

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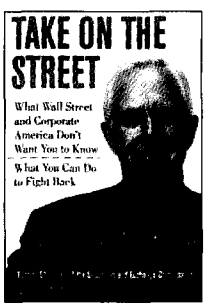
Political Booknotes

Street Wise

By Jane Mayer

BEFORE HE MADE MILLIONS on Wall Street and went on to become, under Bill Clinton, the longest-serving chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission in history (the one who famously attempted to reform notoriously resistant accounting standards), Arthur Levitt Jr. had another ambition. He wanted to be a writer. After graduating from Williams College, he got a job reviewing plays for a small newspaper in the Berkshires. Levitt's father, however, New York State's even-longer-serving comptroller, Arthur Levitt Sr., was a practical man. He had counseled his only son against going to law school, because he felt the profession didn't pay well enough. One can only imagine what he thought of journalism. At any rate, young Levitt didn't dally long in the profession, throwing in his lot instead with some other young men such as Sanford Weill, now the chairman of Citigroup, and Arthur Carter, now publisher of the *New York Observer*, to found what would become the thriving Shearson Lehman stock brokerage firm. But now, after a full and bountiful career, Levitt has apparently decided to go back to his first love. The result is a book co-authored with *Business Week* reporter Paula Dwyer, *Take On The Street: What Wall Street and Corporate America Don't Want You To Know. What You Can Do To Fight Back.*



TAKE ON THE STREET: What Wall Street and Corporate America Don't Want You to Know. What You Can Do To Fight Back
by Arthur Levitt Jr. and Paula Dwyer
Pantheon, $24.95

The book is sometimes as unwieldy as its title, crammed with information aimed at pleasing virtually everyone from expert to novice, of use to both the first-time investor and the experienced policy wonk. But to the surprise, perhaps, of those who see Levitt as a silver-haired establishmentarian, what he has written is in essence an exposé, laying bare an amazing array of traps and rip-offs that await unsuspecting investors. To his credit, long before Enron, Tyco, and the rest of the corporate scandals caught the public eye, Levitt had already devoted much of his career in public service to serving the millions of small investors who have flooded the markets during the past decade, whose lack of sophistication, knowledge, and connections left them at the mercy of unscrupulous insiders. The typical American stock owner, Levitt points out, is no longer particularly wealthy, with an average income of $65,000 and total household assets of $85,000 (and that was before the recent market downturn). His book seems aimed at providing such newcomers to the world of high finance with a kind of underground guide to Wall Street. He reminisces uneasily about the pressures he felt as a young stockbroker to cut corners at the expense of his clients, and in surprisingly frank terms—given his vaunted career on Wall Street—he warns investors that, for the most part, they'd be better off firing their brokers.

While Levitt's public-spiritedness is obviously laudable, and the guide he has produced is clearly useful, some of the more consumer-oriented chapters in *Take On The Street* are about as scintillating to read as the average home-repair book. One such chapter, which shines a light on the murky area of the mechanics of stock trading, is aptly entitled, "Pay Attention to the Plumbing." Although this chapter is a tough read, Levitt's point, one easily forgotten during the past decade of go-go investing, is worth making: that there are myriad hidden costs and risks beneath every form of investment, even "no-load" mutual funds, and anyone who doesn't take the time to figure out just how their brokers are making money, is a consumer waiting to be ripped off.

To the relief of readers looking for more than a consumer guide, Levitt is not a dull man, nor an unambitious one, and so he's done a lot more here than write a how-to book. Not content merely to take on Wall Street, he takes on Washington too, transforming the book from the category of personal finance into a candid, pointed, and eye-opening political memoir. Affable and polite to a fault, Levitt must have found it hard to name the names of those who deserted the public interest in the service of their campaign contributors, but he does here. Even some of his friends and erstwhile allies, such as Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman, are hung out to dry for fealty to their big corporate backers. Levitt is particularly strong in exposing the venality of the accounting profession, providing a wonderful inside account of the eight-year battle royal that accounting firms waged with the help of their pawns in Congress against even the most reasonable attempts at regulation. Levitt tried to warn the public at the time, but few could get past the mind-numbing details to see the political tsunami gathering force. Recent events, however, have proved him prescient. For anyone who now wants to understand how Enron, Arthur Andersen, or their own portfolios collapsed, *Take On The Street* is a must-read.

Distinctive as Levitt's book is as an insider's history, it is also unusual by the standards of Washington memoirs. During the Reagan years, David Stockman and Donald Regan set the standard, using their memoirs to settle scores and buff their own legacies. Since then, George Stephanopoulos, Robert Reich, and other Clintonites have followed suit. But very few of these books have

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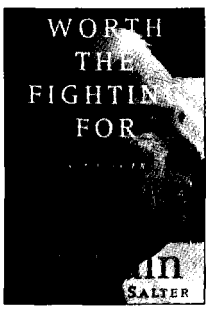
aimed at targets beyond their personal enemies. Most have been extensions of office infighting. What Levitt has tried to do here is quite a bit more valuable. Read from cover to cover, *Take On the Street* provides a comprehensive indictment of the overwhelming influence of private-interest money in Washington, tracing its course from the corruption of Congress to the resultant fleecing of consumers. It's a devastating picture, and one that adds to Levitt's reputation as a serious reformer in a thankless field. Most insiders with access like his stay inside the club. Luckily, Levitt has instead retained the eye of an outsider, and the long-ago wish to be a writer.

JANE MAYER *is a staff writer at* The New Yorker.

Capitol Bore

By Jamie Malanowski

FIRST BOOKS ARE EASY; sequels are hard. Three years ago, Sen. John McCain, strengthened by the hand of his aide Mark Salter, wrote *Faith of My Fathers*, a memoir of his years in military service. It was terrific. McCain told the story of his upbringing, his education at Annapolis, his service as a Navy pilot, and his horrible incarceration as a prisoner of war. Combining this with recollections of his father and grandfather, both distinguished four-star admirals, it presented the moving story of an independent, somewhat rebellious young man recognizing at the lowest ebb in his life the value of the tremendous legacy of honor and service that has been passed onto him.



WORTH THE FIGHTING FOR: A Memoir
by John McCain, with Mark Salter
Random House, $25.95

McCain's new book, again written with Salter's help, is *Worth The Fighting For*. Sad to say, it does not quite measure up to its predecessor. The reason is obvious, and beyond his control: He simply doesn't have as good a story to tell. This book is about his service in government. Rare indeed is the political experience that is the dramatic peer of surviving the Hanoi Hilton.

But a leading senator's account of his 20-odd years in Congress—that should still be good, right? Unfortunately, not that good. McCain in this book is discreet and generous and ostentatiously fair-minded. These are admirable qualities in a leader, but less valuable to a memoirist. McCain criticizes the congressional big spenders who sneak pork-barrel appropriations into legislation, but names no names. He says nice things about Mitch McConnell. He compliments President Bush. He many, many times refers to heated discussions with people, and to outbursts of temper that have come back to haunt him, but he never goes back to the videotape. Whatever returns to haunt McCain in the future isn't going to be anything written here. McCain speaks about pretty nearly everyone with at least the same faint, proper warmth that in-laws manage to summon for one another at wedding rehearsal dinners and post-funeral receptions. Only once in these nearly 400 pages does McCain threaten to break out, after the two or so pages in which he brings a barely concealed disdain upon defense secretary McNamara's lately recorded regrets about Vietnam. But McCain stops before his contempt can fully flower. Too bad. I bet seeing one of McCain's eruptions is captivating, if viewed at a safe remove.

Won't McCain fans find a few good battles where their man comes out the hero? Fewer than you'd think. The chapter on McCain's contribution to normalizing relations with Vietnam is a good one, as is the one on campaign finance reform. But there's a big chapter about the Senate's rejection of the nomination of John Tower as defense secretary. Tower was McCain's friend and mentor, which explains why this piece of ancient history is revisited. There is a long, exquisitely detailed chapter on the Keating Five matter, in which McCain takes the opportunity to present without interruption his side of things. He's entitled—it's his book—but it's not exciting reading. There is a long chapter on the events in the Balkans during the Clinton years, a lot of broccoli to ingest just so McCain can get us into the Senate chamber while he and Bob Dole are engineering a resolution to support the introduction of American peacekeeping forces into the region. This dramatic-enough moment is enhanced in McCain's presentation when Dole rises to speak in favor of the resolution, and the venerable World War II vet discloses that he had for years worn McCain's POW bracelet—something that McCain did not know until then. At almost the same moment we're getting all teary-eyed at the bond between these men, we're reminded that instead of supporting Dole for president, McCain was backing Phil Gramm. One does not have to have a low opinion of Gramm's politics to wonder why the hell McCain thought Gramm—a turtley sourpuss who looks like he never left a big tip in his life—had the right stuff to be president.

Even in the last part of the book, which recounts McCain's underdog drive for the GOP nomination in 2000, McCain avoids looking too much the hero. He twice reminds us that while campaigning in South Carolina he ducked the chance to say he didn't think the Confederate flag belonged atop the state capitol. Give McCain credit for 'fessing up to such weak-kneed expediency, but geez—what good are doomed heroes when they don't display doomed heroism?

The book does have heroes. McCain includes chapters on his personal heroes—Theodore Roosevelt, Billy Mitchell, Ted Williams, Robert Jordan in Hemingway's *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, Marlon Brando's Zapata in *Viva Zapata!* These sketches, I suppose, serve the same purpose as the stories of McCain's father and grandfather served in the first book, and in the same way, the

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best of them are about men he knew well, Congressman Mo Udall and the Vietnamese foreign minister Nguyen Co Thach. And while there's something delightful about hearing a political person enthuse about ballplayers and novels and movies, these sketches, like the book on the whole, suffers from a certain windyness. *Faith of My Fathers*, apart from being a compelling dramatic story, was a very well-written one, composed of strong sentences anchored in detailed, personal, well-observed reminiscences, altogether as sturdy as a Shaker barn. *Worth The Fighting For* is frequently platitudinous.

For my money, though, the worst part about this sequel is that it seems unlikely to be followed by another—the one about McCain's White House days. McCain all but foreswears another run in this book, and before we argue that in 2008 he'd still be younger than Reagan was in 1980, let's realize that by then, his moment may have passed. We have very recently seen a day when America was embroiled in a great crisis, and the times called for a leader who had rhetorical gifts and a fighting spirit and a bipartisan approach and an ethic of service and unquestionable personal credibility. That was the moment for President McCain. But the job was filled.

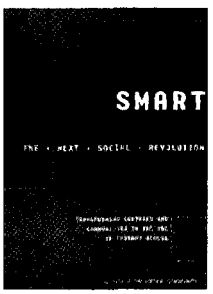
JAMIE MALANOWSKI *is a New York writer.*

Mob Informant

By David Propson

"AT LEAST ONE GOVERNMENT has fallen, in part, because of the way people used text messages," Howard Rheingold claims in his new book, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*. This will be surprising to those who don't even know what text messages are. A few years ago, Rheingold himself didn't. Yet today, he reports, in some countries, mobile phones are used more for sending short messages entered via the keypad—"texting"—than for making calls. All those little keystrokes can add up to much more, he claims. In January 2001 one million Filipino protesters helped force President Joseph Estrada from power, catalyzed by a text-message summoning them to Epfinaio de los Santos Avenue: "Go 2EDSA. Wear Blck."

According to Rheingold, the Manila protesters and the Palm Pilot-wielding demonstrators who disrupted the World Trade Organization's 1999 Seattle meeting were avatars of a new form of social organization: the "smart mob," an ad-hoc alliance formed fleetingly by people who may not know one another but share a common, immediate goal and can communicate instantaneously. Powerful, fast, and ubiquitous computing devices will, he argues, permit new forms of cooperation to develop. He hopes that mobile communications will create an environment where "epidemics of cooperation" can flourish, whether among rescue workers, doctors, or plain everyday pedestrians.



SMART MOBS:
The Next Social Revolution
by Howard Rheingold
Perseus, $26.00

Rheingold, co-founder of *Wired* magazine's online community and former editor of the *Whole Earth Review*, helped create the gee-whiz messianic tone that infected most technology coverage by the time of the dot-com boom. *Smart Mobs*, like most of his previous books, styles itself as a report from the trenches, introducing readers to the cleverest corporate researchers and most inventive minds, unsystematically dipping into sociology and psychology, and trying to sum it all up under a single thesis. Thus it's a bit of a grab bag: Between chatting up communards in Scandinavia and self-made cyborgs in Toronto, he contemplates al Qaeda's use of cell phones, Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons*, and the threat of increasingly precise government and corporate surveillance. Still, a few themes can be teased out of the tangle.

He begins by asking why people cooperate at all, leading the reader through potted histories of game theory and the evolution of altruism before getting back to technology. People come to cooperate based on such factors as shared history, apparent trustworthiness, and social reputation. But as anyone who uses the Internet is aware, electronic communication is often anonymous, making these factors hard to gauge. Rheingold admits this problem has not been satisfactorily solved.

The heart of his book catalogs the technologies he believes will enable these new forms of cooperation. Most involve so-called "pervasive computing," in which small microchips that transmit information wirelessly will be embedded in all sorts of everyday objects. Clothes and cars will tell you who owns them or how to go about fixing them. One company already sells a chip that, implanted subcutaneously, stores a patient's medical history. Smart-mob members, Rheingold suggests, will cooperate not just with other people but with other things. (It's not always clear what he means by "cooperate," however—are you "cooperating" with Kelloggs when you scan the price off a cereal box?)

Finally, Rheingold looks at the effect that phones, Palm Pilots, and other pervasive devices have already had. In Japan, the mobile phone has played the same liberating role for teenagers that the automobile did in America, creating a "place" where they can socialize away from parental supervision. In the United States, urban geeks are disrupting telecommunication-company plans and creating free, citywide wireless networks by making their Internet connections accessible without charge (see "The Broadband Militia," by Michael Behar, March).

Actual smart mobs, however, remain elusive. Even Rheingold's best examples don't meet all his own criteria. He admits that texting's main role in Manila was not as a tool for cooperation but as a medium for "moral support." Likewise, the Seattle demonstrations were not ad hoc, but "deliberate and tactically focused." The closest he comes to

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nailing down what he means by the term is "mobile ad hoc social networks"—but that would seem to include less-novel phenomena, such as CB radio buddies.

Perhaps more to the point, in all the cases that Rheingold cites, mobile devices were used spontaneously to protest or disrupt, not to accomplish anything constructive. Early government attempts to coordinate activities like disaster relief by amassing location-specific databases (such as Al Gore's now-defunct "Digital Earth" initiative) have foundered due to insufficient funding, bureaucratic inertia, and a lack of common standards. Given that history, Rheingold's belief that simply adding new technology to the mix will magically spur coordinated activity seems hopelessly optimistic.

Pervasive technology is sure to have many effects on the way we live our lives, and "smart mobs" could turn out to be one of them. But the book doesn't make a convincing case. Read it for investment tips, to learn what the kids in Tokyo and San Francisco are up to, or just to marvel at the newest gadgets—but not if you're looking for the revolution.

DAVID PROPSON *is an editor at* The New York Sun.

Gilding the Gipper

By Reihan Salam

PRACTICALLY FROM THE MOment he left office in 1989, there has been a determined effort among conservatives to canonize Ronald Reagan. Republican strategist Grover Norquist launched the Ronald Reagan Legacy Project to flood the nation with monuments to the beloved Gipper, affixing his name to streets, subways, and junior high schools in every state and county. A Republican bill to create a Reagan monument on the National Mall was introduced in Congress. There was even talk of adding Reagan's mug to Mount Rushmore.

A similar fever has gripped conservative historians, who, for several years now, have been doing their part to burnish Reagan's image by penning starry-eyed accounts of his presidency that exaggerate his achievements while glossing over any unpleasantness. The latest of these, Peter Schweizer's *Reagan's War*, is the real Ronald Reagan Legacy Project. It's a monument in print.

Those looking for inside details about the debates and decisions that led to the demise of the Soviet Union won't find them here. Schweizer is a fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institute—along with the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute, one of the Vaticans of conservative orthodoxy—who has chosen instead to offer a predictable series of anecdotes that paint a simplistic, Hollywood-style tale of how one man's lifelong crusade against Communism brought down the Soviet Union. As a young man, Reagan stood down Red hooligans in Hollywood, where he first recognized that Communism was an unmitigated menace. After reading *The Treaty Trap* and *Power Through Subversion* (both written by old friend Laurence Beilenson) in the 1970s, he developed the strategy that years hence would bog down the Soviets in Afghanistan, Angola, and Central America and roll back the frontiers of Communism. The list goes on. And while Schweizer does briefly acknowledge the Iran-Contra scandal, he does so only to cite it as "a testament to Reagan's courage." Schweizer's Reagan is a real-life Jack Ryan: a selfless patriot who always gets it right.

REAGAN'S WAR:
The Epic Story of His 40-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism
by Peter Schweizer
Doubleday, $26.00

Reagan's War reveals more about the minds of the conservative intelligentsia than it does about Ronald Reagan. According to Schweizer, Reagan's central virtue was his unbending belief in the evils of Communism and his willingness to maintain a steely hard-line in the face of those who lacked his internal fortitude. After all, Schweizer argues, he had "a well-developed plan seeking the demise of the Soviet Union," honed over the course of three decades. The irony is that while the real Reagan did indeed see the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," he became far more flexible than many hard-liners would have liked. (Norman Podhoretz, for one, often worried that Reagan was going soft.)

As more sober-minded historians have pointed out, Reagan was a very different man at the end of his presidency, one whose crusading impulse had given way to a more nuanced understanding of the Soviet threat. While it's true that Reagan's hawkishness almost certainly played a role in helping reformists like Gorbachev overcome more hard-line forces in the former Soviet Union, as Barbara Farnham, a senior associate of the Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, has written, "He had been transformed from an 'essentialist,' who believed that the Soviet Union was governed by an ideology that put no limits on what it could justifiably do to gain its ends of 'absolute power and a communist world,' to an 'interactionist,' who saw the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States in terms of mutual misperception." To Reagan's credit, this is hardly the Manichean outlook of an ideologue. Perhaps not surprisingly, Schweizer doesn't share this view. Though he pays lip service to the post-Gorbachev softening of Reagan's stance, Schweizer sees it as—you guessed it—perfectly consistent with Reagan's decades-old master plan. The author bases this contention largely on Reagan's adamant refusal to abandon the Strategic Defense Initiative and his failure to conclude any new commercial agreements with Moscow at the end of his presidency. By now, Reagan's zeal for SDI, based on a profound belief in the immorality of nuclear war, is the stuff of legend, and so his refusal is unsurprising. What is surprising, and overlooked by Schweizer, is Reagan's acquies-

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cence in the decline in U.S. military spending that began under his administration, a far more significant sign than the state of U.S.-Soviet trade relations.

Reagan's dramatic shift from confrontation to constructive engagement paved the way for George Bush's more moderate presidency, which saw the Soviet Union diminish from a fading-but-formidable enemy to a virtual nonentity. Bush accomplished this by taking a lesson from his predecessor. Whereas Reagan pushed a hard-line policy against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua by financing anti-Communist rebels, Bush compromised with Democrats and various Latin American nations to rein in the Contras and bring about the elections that ousted the Sandinistas and ended years of civil war—exactly the kind of wimpy move condemned by Reagan's acolytes. (Schweizer glosses over this entirely, indirectly crediting Reagan with the triumph without ever mentioning his successor.) Bush used a similarly thoughtful approach to assemble the Gulf War coalition that defeated Saddam Hussein and to manage the collapse of the Soviet empire.

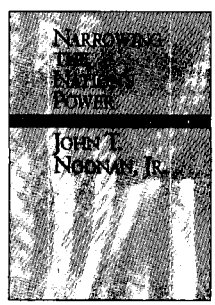
Reagan's War is less a paean to an actual man than an act of wholesale historical reinvention. Schweizer's Reagan is a caricature, a one-dimensional Commie-fightin' cowboy, who shoots first and ask questions later. All of this is in keeping with the broader Reagan Legacy Project wherein conservatives recast the Gipper as a sort of secular saint, a conservative answer to FDR and JFK. Doing so is a useful way for conservatives today to chasten, bully, and cajole those who dare stray from the Church of Reagan—the religion of low taxes, big military budgets, and hawkish foreign policy. It's no accident, then, that Republicans frequently invoke the term "Reaganesque" to describe George W. Bush, as they have lately when advocating hard-line policies like a unilateral U.S. invasion of Iraq that makes no bid for U.N. cooperation. They mean for Bush to be less like his father, the moderate multilateralist, and more like the manly, tough-talking, go-it-alone Reagan of legend. But as Bush demonstrated in his recent speech to the United Nations, he is quite willing to change tack and embrace a more nuanced approach to the national threat. So in that sense, he is indeed "Reaganesque"—just not the Reagan that Schweizer has invented.

REIHAN SALAM *is a writer based in Brooklyn.*

States Supreme

By Josh Gottheimer

IN THE 1980S, DURING THE Reagan-Bush I reign, a wave of conservative jurists rode to prominence on a searing critique of their predecessors: the judicial system—especially during the Earl Warren years—had become a playground for liberal, activist judges who played fast and loose with the text of the Constitution. The conservatives charged these judges with reading the Constitution too broadly, misusing provisions like the commerce clause to drape minorities and other groups with broad federal protections. This interpretation, the conservatives charged, caused an imbalance of power between the federal government and the states, tilting unacceptably toward the former and allowing Congress to encroach steadily on the province of the states.



NARROWING THE NATION'S POWER
The Supreme Court Sides With The States
by John T. Noonan, Jr.
University of California Press, $24.95

The essential argument of Judge John T. Noonan's book, *Narrowing the Nation's Power*, is that in an effort to correct this supposed imbalance, those same conservative jurists have in recent years abandoned their commitment to a strict reading of the Constitution, embracing, under the tutelage of Chief Justice William Rehnquist, a specious view of states' rights. Noonan rails against this devolution of power from Congress and toward the states (called, ironically, "federalism"), and the tactics that the five-member majority on the Supreme Court have employed to produce it. By declaring that the states are beyond the reach of many federal laws (granting them what lawyers call "sovereign immunity"), Noonan contends that the court has manipulated the Constitution "without justification," risking "intolerable injury to the enforcement of federal standards ... [and] danger to the exercise of democratic government." The rise of sovereign immunity has set off a firestorm in federal courts around the country, as state officials push the limits of their newfound power. By capitalizing on recent rulings, the states have shielded themselves from congressional mandates on topics from civil rights to crime to fair labor standards.

Noonan's critique of the Supreme Court's approach isn't exactly a new one. The tug of war between states' rights and a strong central government is age-old, dating back to when Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson jousted over a proposed national bank, a federal militia, and forgiving state debt. But coming from a widely respected, and Reagan-appointed judge, Noonan's critique carries a particularly powerful punch. A Harvard-educated law professor, Noonan was appointed to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 1985. He is often considered one of the most thoughtful theorists on the bench, and has written extensively on religious freedom and Catholic moral doctrine.

In a candid analysis, Noonan asserts that the court's approach to broadening sovereign immunity (and its own power) has been nothing short of "an invasion of the [Congress]." Until recently, the court had largely interpreted the 14th Amendment as allowing Congress to pass legislation that it believed was "appropriate" to prevent the states from infringing upon the rights of citizens. That all changed in its 1993

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holding in *City of Boerne v. Flores*. In that case, which established a new era of federalism, a conservative majority declared that the court, rather than Congress, had the power to decide what was "appropriate." Claiming Congress had overstepped its authority, the court struck down the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which mandated that "government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion ... except in furtherance of a compelling national interest." Wielding its new authority, the court later struck down or narrowed congressional legislation on patents, age discrimination, and domestic violence.

Noonan also takes issue with the naked hypocrisy of the Rehnquist faction in abandoning its "literalist" interpretation of the Constitution: "It was once asserted by some members of the present court that decisions were wrong if they were unfaithful to the text of the Constitution or lacked fidelity to the original intent of the framers." Now the court "has embraced with mistaken enthusiasm a doctrine of state immunity that is overextended, unjustified by history, and unworkable in any consistent way."

Narrowing the Nation's Power is no Grisham thriller. But, to his credit, Noonan succeeds in bringing life to what could otherwise have been a dreary exercise. In a strikingly fresh approach, he explains the doctrine of sovereign immunity by staging a dialogue among a cast of characters posing as judicial clerks for Samuel Simple, a fictional federal appellate judge. This Socratic approach helps the author distill complex concepts into discernable prose and maintain readers' attention (even non-lawyers), as Noonan moves through arguments and cases that may seem arcane, but that threaten to take the nation down a perilous road. This past session, for example, the court continued its tear, issuing several opinions that further limit federal power. Most glaringly, in a 5-4 decision, the court ruled on a dispute between the Federal Maritime Commission, which enforces the Federal Shipping Act, and the state-owned port of Charleston, S.C. A cruise line had complained to the commission that the port had wrongfully denied a berth to one of its ships, but the court ruled that the federal commission had no authority over the port. Why does this case matter? Because the court found a new way to guard states from the actions of executive branch agencies—the 11th Amendment, which had never been used in that way. With one more wall between states and federal authority, the court has more freedom than ever before to shield the states from congressional oversight. In his dissent, Justice Breyer declared, "[This decision] lacks any firm anchor in the Constitution's text ... [and] sets loose an interpretive principle that restricts far too severely the authority of the federal government to regulate ... relationships between state and citizen." One can only imagine how the states, armed with this ruling, might contest other federal prerogatives.

In the coming term, the Supreme Court plans to hear an appeal from the state of Nevada challenging Congress's authority to require states, under the Family and Medical Leave Act, to give their employees unpaid leave for family medical emergencies. If history is any indicator and Noonan's analysis is correct, Nevada, the federalists, and the Bush administration might enjoy another fruitful year.

JOSH GOTTHEIMER, *a former speechwriter to President Bill Clinton, is the editor of* Ripples Of Hope: Great American Civil Rights Speeches, *which will be published in the spring.*

Oliver Stoned

By Justin Peters

AT FIRST GLANCE, THE PREMISE of Eric Hamburg's new memoir, *JFK, Nixon, Oliver Stone and Me*, seems very cinematic. A cross between *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington* and *The Player*, Hamburg's tale of an idealistic young congressional aide who leaves Capitol Hill for Oliver Stone's Hollywood—only to have his dream of making intelligent, socially responsible films crushed by sleazy dealmakers and greedy executives—is quintessential big-screen material: the ruination of ambitions, the defiling of innocents, and a paranoid, drug-addled antagonist. Yet, like so much else that emerges from Hollywood, the book fails to live up to its billing. Neglecting the big picture, Hamburg gets so bogged down in mundane details and petty gossip that by the end, you feel like you did after *Batman and Robin* or *Lethal Weapon 4*: All you want is your time and money back.

JFK, NIXON, OLIVER STONE, AND ME
An Idealist's Journey from Capitol Hill to Hollywood Hell
by Eric Hamburg
Public Affairs, $26.00

In 1991, Hamburg was an aide to Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) and a wonk obsessed with the JFK assassination. Following the release of Stone's film *JFK* that same year, there was a public clamor to open the files of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, and Hamilton, prodded by his young aide, was at its head. During the course of his work on the project, Hamburg became acquainted with Stone, and a short time later, penned a star-struck letter to the director offering his services on future film projects. To Hamburg's surprise, Stone accepted, and he was off to Tinseltown.

The time during which Hamburg worked for Stone was a tumultuous one for the controversial director, characterized by a series of forgettable movies (*U-Turn*, *Any Given Sunday*) and a much-publicized substance-abuse problem. *JFK, Nixon, Oliver Stone and Me* is ostensibly a record of this period, the decline and fall of Oliver Stone as told by his man Friday. Hamburg naturally places himself at the center of the narrative and presents himself as a latter-day Mr. Smith, adrift in a sea of venal Hollywood sharks and second-handers. Whether or not it's a put-on,

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Hamburg certainly comes across as the prototypical rube: naïve, dependable, earnest to a fault.

But, as odysseys go, Hamburg's is an especially uninteresting one. His main accomplishment was shepherding *Nixon* from script to screen, and while the details of this endeavor are kind of interesting, they're not enough to sustain an entire book. Beyond the Nixon saga, the book consists mostly of disjointed ramblings about assassination plots. While his friends and family might enjoy these stories, I suspect that most other readers will quickly tire of Hamburg's pedestrian observations—his bemusement at afternoon-long meetings, his struggles to get a full producer credit, his personality conflicts with Stone and his hangers-on.

Hamburg does spend a decent amount of space discussing Oliver Stone and the movie business in general, and he tries to make the insights he offers in these parts seem fresh and relevant. But what new insights, really, does Hamburg present? That Oliver Stone is a dope? Anyone who's seen him on "Celebrity Jeopardy!" already knows that. That most Hollywood films are geared towards 14-year-old boys? A glance at the movie listings in any newspaper will confirm that. Aside from that, Hamburg is apparently consumed with an almost pathological dislike of a producer named Dan Halsted, whom Hamburg invariably refers to as "Danny the Weasel." Had Hamburg spent half as much time analyzing the roots of the Washington-Hollywood nexus as he spent trashing Danny the Weasel, his book might have lived up to its promise.

But Hamburg's book is worse than boring. It's irrelevant. The modern growth of the so-called Washington-Hollywood connection is an interesting phenomenon, and one that warrants serious analysis. Politicians and entertainers both live their lives in the public eye, and it's only natural that they would feel some sort of kinship. As the line between the real and the hyperreal continues to blur in this age of around-the-clock media coverage, this mutual fascination will undoubtedly grow even stronger. An insider's view of this—one Hamburg would have been well-equipped to offer—would have made for a fascinating, useful book. As it stands, though, *JFK, Nixon, Oliver Stone, and Me* is a mere vanity project, a gossipy, superficial screed more concerned with personalities than issues—ironically, much like the Hollywood culture that Hamburg claims to disdain.

JUSTIN PETERS *is a writer in New York.*

Wheel Estate

By Joshua Green

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A MORE maligned sector of the housing market than mobile homes: The very term calls to mind rural poverty, tornado damage, and the tawdry domestic violence of "Cops." The authors of *The Unknown World of the Mobile Home*, all geographers, have set themselves to the considerable task of rehabilitating this image in this careful examination of the history, economics, and public-policy issues surrounding mobile homes, one of the fastest growing segments of today's housing market.

THE UNKNOWN WORLD OF THE MOBILE HOME
by John Fraser Hart, Michelle J. Rhodes, John T. Morgan
Johns Hopkins University Press, $42.00

The earliest mobiles appeared in the 1920s and were often homemade travel trailers consisting of little more than canvas and wood. Arthur G. Sherman, the president of a Detroit pharmaceutical company, is generally credited with being the first to mass produce them. Sherman's six-by-nine-foot rolling wooden box (with coal-burning stove) appealed mightily to the newly mobile post-war generation that embraced "automobile camping." Such sporting titans of the day as Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and even President Warren Harding were renowned enthusiasts. By 1933, Sherman dominated a market restricted only by state highway regulations. Municipal campgrounds sprang up along roadsides nationwide to cater to this new breed of tourist.

The idyllic image of camping along the open road didn't last long. Practically from the outset, trailer parks and campgrounds attracted undesirables—not vacationers, but traveling salesmen, seasonal workers, and transients. The Great Depression drove the financially desperate into trailer homes in ever larger numbers, sparking what today are common complaints: Trailer parks depress property values; they're dens of iniquity; and their inhabitants don't pay their fair share of taxes. By 1937, *Fortune* magazine was stigmatizing them as "crowded rookeries of itinerant flophouses." Their image was forever tarnished.

To stave off trailer folk, municipal governments began charging fees, limiting stays, and passing restrictive zoning ordinances that banished trailers to the outskirts of town. Prudish civic leaders charged that children reared in one-room mobiles were gaining a corrupting early knowledge of sex. Moreover, trailers were "uniquely susceptible" to fire and high winds. Mobile homes got a brief respite from this opprobrium during World War II when they served as convenient housing for war workers who flocked to cities like San Francisco for defense-related manufacturing jobs. Even the government bought in. In 1942, the National Housing Agency oversaw 35,000 trailers that served as temporary housing for GIs.

But public acceptance of trailers as permanent homes never really took root. The mobile housing industry's Reformation came in 1963, when the trade group for the tonier self-propelled recreational vehicles, or "RVs," split with its downmarket sibling, thus cementing the complicated pecking order that still obtains among enthusiasts of various forms of mobile housing, and essentially dooming the trailer to its current ignominy. In a bid for respect, the industry successfully

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lobbied Congress to stipulate in the 1980 Housing Act that the term "mobile home" be changed to "manufactured housing" in all federal law and literature. Yet, tragically, the effort seems to have been for naught. The Census Bureau counts mobile homes in the same category as railroad cars and "permanently inhabited tents."

Though *The Unknown World of the Mobile Home* bills itself as a dispassionate academic study, there's little doubt where the authors' sympathies lie. Hart, Rhodes, and Morgan are vexed by the public's low regard for mobile homes, and defend them with the devoted gusto that academics with obscure specialties frequently display. They tout the advantages that mobiles hold over traditional homes (the authors like to call them "monster" or "stick" homes): They're cheaper; they're portable; and, especially among seniors, they foster a close-knit sense of community. The old joke about trailers—residents are either "newly wed or newly dead"—is turned on its head; the authors argue that, in fact, mobiles fill vital gaps in the housing market by providing starter homes for young couples and affordable housing for seniors. They envision trailers filling other needs, as well, suggesting that they might be rolled into vacant lots in inner cities, and even hinting (somewhat preposterously) that, had the government adopted such a policy at the time, the urban race riots of the 1960s—partly sparked by a shortage of low-income housing—might have been avoided. In essence, they consider mobile homes a public-policy solution on wheels.

Despite such engaging attributes, however, mobile homes are hardly the panacea they're presented to be, as a closer exegesis of the book reveals. As a housing option for the poor, they may be necessary, but they're hardly ideal. Unlike traditional homes, which appreciate in value, mobile homes *depreciate*. One reason so many are sold is that so many wear out. Though they are built ever wider, sturdier, and, with a little landscaping, can be made to look like traditional homes, this comes at the cost of their portability. Moving a "mobile" home—especially a fancy "double wide" or "triple wide," the McMansions of the well-to-do trailer set—has grown prohibitively expensive. As a result, 95 percent stay put. And (in case you're wondering) mobiles remain uniquely susceptible to disaster; even the weakest classification of tornado will sweep them away.

But perhaps the surest sign that mobile homes won't soon replace brick ones comes from the authors' own anthropological research, which included journeys to several trailer parks and scrupulously documented interviews with residents. While there were those who seemed happy with their lot, many more were not. Eager as the authors are to get more Americans into mobile homes, many already in them seem awfully eager to get out.

JOSHUA GREEN *is an editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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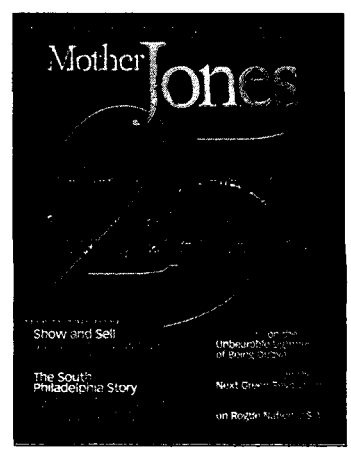

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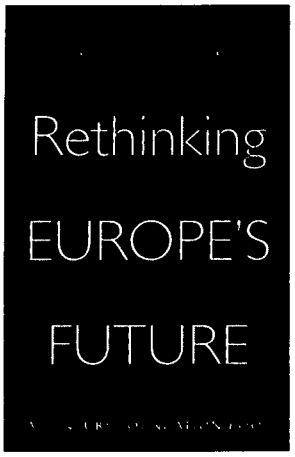

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David P. Calleo

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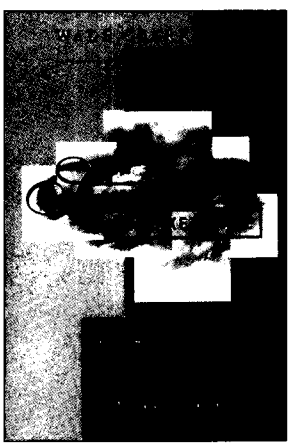

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